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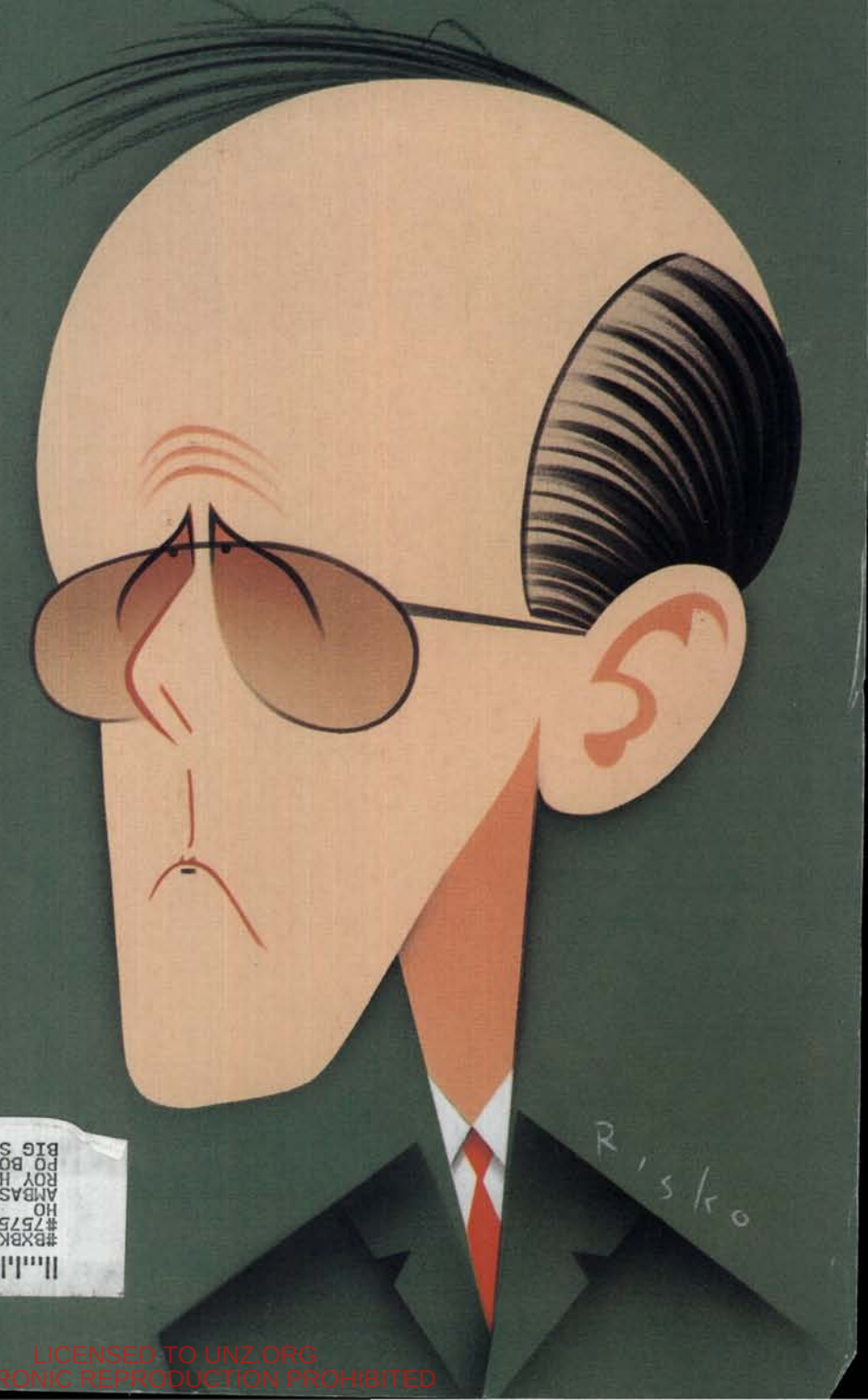

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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MARCH 7, 1994

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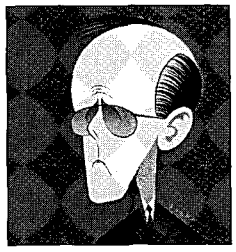

Cover by Robert Risko for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Article on page 19.

4 **CORRESPONDENCE** No end to "No Exit," Kinsley aces the LSAT &c.

6 **MICHAEL KINSLEY** TRB: DREAM COME TRUE Why Congress deserves a balanced budget amendment.

7 **THE EDITORS** ATTENTION DEFICIT A good start, but not far enough.

8 **NOTEBOOK** On eggshells in Sarajevo, devious doctors, Lasch remembered &c.

9 **DOUGLAS G. McGRATH** THE FLAPJACK FILE: TOFU FLECKS Enter Ira.

10 **ANDY AARON** WELCOME TO THE '90S A new hardy perennial.

11 **FRED BARNES** WHITE HOUSE WATCH: GOING CELLULAR Let the trade wars begin.

12 **JONATHAN STEVENSON** BELFAST POSTCARD: THE TROUBLES How bad is it?

14 **ELIOT A. COHEN** DOWN THE HATCH The perils of the Pentagon's bottom-up review.

19 **CHARLES LANE** THE MASTER OF THE GAME A journey down the paper trail of Strobe Talbott: Russophile, establishmentarian, FOB—and soon-to-be secretary of state.

30 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: MESSING AROUND *Romeo Is Bleeding* is a disaster; *I'll Do Anything* is even worse.

31 **ROBERT BRUSTEIN** ON THEATER: A THEATER MARKING TIME The star of the London scene: Diana Rigg in *Medea.*

33 **TONY JUDT** THE PARIS STRANGLER *The Future Lasts Forever: A Memoir* by Louis Althusser

37 **MINDY ALOFF** BODY LANGUAGE *Mark Morris* by Joan Acocella

41 **PAULA FREDRIKSEN** DESERT STORM *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls* edited by Hershel Shanks; *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* edited by James H. Charlesworth; *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* by Robert H. Eisenman and Michael Wise

42 **PETER DAVISON** POEM *The Narcissists*

46 **MICKEY KAUS** WASHINGTON DIARIST: OLD NEWS

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CORRESPONDENCE

No end

To the editors:

Elizabeth McCaughey could be speaking for the majority of practicing physicians in the United States who are concerned that the Clinton health care plan, as well as many other ideas for health care reform, will restrict physicians' ability to deliver first-rate and appropriate health care to their patients ("No Exit," February 7). Access to health care for the Clintonites really means access to primary care, which is supposedly cost-effective, while limiting further referral and utilization. McCaughey is rightly concerned that decisions regarding medical management will be made by nonphysicians who will likely face severe budget constraints. For example, the projected savings for the proposed Medicare plans are pure fantasy unless severe restrictions, as indicated by McCaughey, are instituted. Primary care physicians under ClintonCare will become "gate-closers," not gatekeepers.

The keys to health care reform are: (1) reform the health insurance industry to allow universal access at a reasonable price and include health insurers in malpractice risk for their influence on medical management decisions, (2) increase direct costs to the public for their use of the health care system based on ability to pay and/or preference and (3) allow adequate physician and patient autonomy so that doctors work for their patients, not for the government or an insurance company.

MARTIN D. CAPLAN, M.D.
Richmond, Virginia

To the editors:

Elizabeth McCaughey lays out the Clinton plan clearly. What we get is lowest common denominator medicine, a scheme not calculated to produce excellence. How can it when the medical professionals are out of the loop when it comes to making decisions? Where does progress come from in medicine? Surely not from the layers of bureaucracy that will second-guess and judge the professionals. Pass this bill and we're on the road to diminishing returns in medical care.

MARIUS BRAMBILLA
Arlington, Virginia

To the editors:

Elizabeth McCaughey paints a haunting and frightening picture to both patients and physicians about the future of health care—about thirty years too late. Unfortunately, the future is now, and virtually every scenario described in her article is already in full force for the vast majority of Americans, the result of years of "market-oriented" strategies dating from the Nixon years through the Reagan-Bush era. Blaming the current ills of the medical care system on a future health plan seems rather bizarre. As for the complexity of the Clinton plan, multiply the 1,364-page Health Security Act by 1,000 and read the underwriting documents, utilization review protocols and payment contracts for every health insurer in the country. Add layers of federal and state insurance laws and hospitals' cost-shifting accounting and I'll show you a truly complex health care plan.

The Clinton plan or some other version of national health care hopefully will simplify health care for all parties, which is exactly what many do *not* want. It is the complexity of the current system that allows undeserved profits to be wrung out by those clever enough to exploit the rules and by consultants hired to interpret them. Many aspects of managed competition are indeed complex, but consider one of the strategies—booting certain services out of health insurance coverage. The ultimate simplification of fee-for-service medicine will occur—pay cash on the barrel, as you go, no third parties please. For services such as in vitro fertilization, no more need for private technology assessment, actuarial analysis, utilization review, certification and contracting with doctors. Imagine, all that energy now plowed into making in vitro fertilization cheaper and better. Obviously, this is not a solution for many medical services, hence complexity returns, but the willingness to state that care will and must be limited with some semblance of fairness is a major strength of the Clinton plan.

DAVID H. MARK, M.D., M.P.H.
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

To the editors:

In "Cassandra's Law" (February 14), Theodore Marmor and Jeffrey Mashaw attack Elizabeth McCaughey's critique of the Clinton health care reform plan as an unrealistic dystopia. If Marmor and Mashaw recalled the Greek legend accurately, they would know that Cassandra (daughter of King Priam of Troy) was given the gift of prophecy (*correctly* predicting the future) by Apollo, but a curse was placed upon her such that no one would believe her predictions. Thus, by calling McCaughey a Cassandra, and by claiming not to believe her predictions of the pernicious effects of Clinton's health plan, they imply that her warnings are in fact accurate!

RICHARD FUCHS, M.D.
New York, New York

Kinsley esq.

To the editors:

Michael Kinsley's tactics are seeming more and more like they are derived from so many LSAT preparatory classes. The most recommended (and predictable) argument structure is one that presents opposing arguments and methodically deconstructs them. Classic and effective. Unfortunately, in lawyer Kinsley's hands, the tactic has become "present opposing argument and deconstruct opponent."

Case in point: in "Second Opinion" (TRB, February 14), Kinsley, after some gratuitous sarcasm directed toward Elizabeth McCaughey, attacks *The Wall Street Journal* for decrying the HMOs' harmful effects on patients through their stingy controls on testing, while the same *Journal* advocates controls on malpractice suits. The reason? Hypocrisy. It seems that the *Journal* consulted with malpractice experts for its opinion. Talk about non sequiturs! The *Journal* has never implied that malpractice specialists are unreliable or incompetent, only that it has a problem with the boundaries set by many of these specialists (i.e., none). Kinsley takes the *Journal*'s arguments on malpractice to extremes that were neither intended nor implied.

Kinsley then follows with yet another attack, this time on The Heritage Foundation's "fantastic" numbers relating to the new taxes the Clintons would impose and the projected deficits, yet fails to consider the "fantastic" number of people allegedly without health care that the Clinton camp frequently resorts to, a number that has been questioned repeatedly by friend and foe of the administration.

In an amazingly bold finish to this essay, Kinsley asks if we are capable of having a rational debate on health care. I've gathered that a debate is only rational to Kinsley if it precludes any straying from the Democratic Party line.

ANWAR M. GHULOUM
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

All the president's clergymen

To the editors:

In his article "Rev. Bill" (January 31), Fred Barnes attempts to depict President Clinton as the always maneuvering political manipulator, and has concluded that the president's motives regarding religion are shallow and primarily a means of winning over the "Christian right."

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But I was one of those thirteen clergy people who attended the White House breakfast on AIDS and spirituality on November 29, 1993, and my experience with the president's religious motives was quite the contrary.

Those in attendance at the meeting covered the full spectrum of beliefs, practices and faith communities. All were involved directly in the HIV/AIDS community and how it affected their own religious community. After ninety minutes of extraordinary exchange, no one left with the cynical burden with which you imply Clinton is pushing "this religious stuff."

I have been a rabbi for more than twenty years and can tell when a person is "faking" a public show of piety. President Clinton and Vice President Al Gore, who was also in attendance, are what they claim—religious at their core. I am pleased we have a national leadership that is legitimately spiritual and willing to ask serious religious questions.

On November 29, the president wanted our front-line perceptions on how and why religion has a role in the HIV/AIDS epidemic. No other president has ever listened to the clergy talk about caring, prevention, education and the need for hope for the living. The president takes "this religious stuff" seriously. Thank God! We now have a leader who finally listens to his conscience and responds to his soul more than many of the all too cynical media. The Rev. Bill you describe is far too cunning to care as much as the man who sat across from me at the breakfast table. Religion has made it to the White House; it's being lived there in the vision and the values of the president.

RABBI JOSEPH A. EDELHEIT
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Race matters

To the editors:

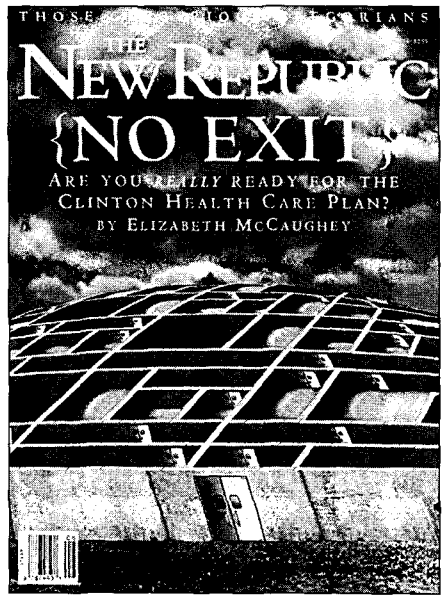
THE NEW REPUBLIC's January 24 editorial about transracial adoption, "All in the Family," misrepresented the "Sunday's Child" column that the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange coordinates with *The Boston Sunday Globe*.

TNR stated that the column is HHS-funded, which is incorrect. There is no federal funding provided for the column. It is primarily state-funded by the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. *The Boston Globe* donates the space for the column.

Additionally, your article claimed that the Sunday's Child "list is taken from the National Register, which forbids cross-race matches for six months." We've never heard of the National Register, and there is no policy here that forbids cross-race matching for six months. The children featured are from Massachusetts, and occasionally from other New England states. Without exception, all interested families who respond to the column are referred to the children's social worker to learn more about the child, regardless of race.

We would like to emphasize that MARE is committed to recruiting families of color for children of color. We also believe that families of color on the whole can better equip children of color with a sense of their heritage, and with the tools they will need to cope in an often racist society.

Nobody wants children to wait forever, though, and there comes a point when any family who can make a permanent commitment to a child should be con-



sidered. We believe, however, that if everything possible were being done to recruit and retain families of color, transracial adoption would be a moot point. There would be enough families of color for the children who wait.

Finally, it is important to remember that when people advocate transracial adoption, they are talking about putting black children in Caucasian homes; they are not talking about placing Caucasian children in black families. Somehow that would reframe this entire controversy.

CAROLYN E. SMITH
Executive Director
The Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange
Boston, Massachusetts

To the editors:

As the white parent of a mixed-race adopted son, I enjoyed reading your editorial "All in the Family." But I think it covers only half of the problem of transracial adoption. It leaves unmentioned the racism that gave rise to the dispute over the placement of minority and mixed-race children in the first place.

Many whites do not wish to adopt across racial lines. The closest thing to baby-selling involves healthy white infants, often placed in states like Texas with virtually no restrictions on adoption procedures. The crises in central Europe and the former Soviet Union have proved to be a windfall for adoptive parents because suddenly there is a steady supply of white—repeat, white—infant and older orphans.

Your phrase "simple math would put some of the black children in white homes" really bends the problem, omitting any discussion of the white families who proclaim that they are not racist but wait patiently, and desperately, for a white adoption.

You endorse the proposed law that would "grant the next available child to the next waiting family," but you need to recognize that many white families would not second your motion, simply because they do not wish to participate in a transracial adoption.

As often happens, a minority community raises a barrier of protectionism in response to the racism that surrounds it, and is then criticized for its nationalism, while the original proponents of racism slide happily away. Solve this problem and the adoption issue will be much easier.

BILL BARRY
Baltimore, Maryland

Fabulous crusaders

To the editors:

Michael J. Lynch of Toledo, Ohio, seems to have missed the whole point of your December 20, 1993, cover illustration (Correspondence, January 24). That image, of Batman and Robin declaring homosexual love for each other, is a sly reference to "Seduction of the Innocent," a mid-1950s work in which the mendacious Dr. Wertham sought to discredit comic books by declaring that Batman and Robin constitute a "homosexual wish-fulfillment fantasy." That kind of ludicrous use of homosexuals as all-purpose bogeymen who will deform our children, weaken our military, blight our crops and make all our cows go dry is still with us and deserves all the ridicule that you can heap upon it. What surprised me, though, is that DC Comics, whose most senior executives should certainly have understood the meaning of your cover, demanded an apology. Now *that's* queer.

DENNIS ANTHONY
Los Angeles, California

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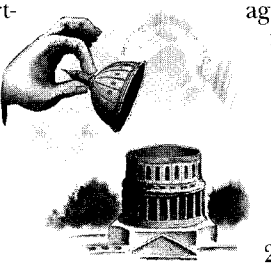
TRB®
FROM WASHINGTON

Dream come true

Back in the days when Republican presidents used to call for a balanced budget constitutional amendment without ever proposing a balanced budget—and when it looked like there'd be Republican presidents forever—I used to support the idea on the principle of the old Chinese curse: may your dreams come true. It would force these hypocrites to live by their alleged principles.

Now we have a Democratic president who actually has done far more than his predecessors to bring us back toward fiscal responsibility. Clinton is the first president in decades to cut both domestic and military spending in real terms. Bush's 1990 budget deal had about the same $500 billion of deficit reduction as Clinton's one-vote squeaker of last summer. But any dieter will tell you that the second ten pounds is a lot harder to lose than the first ten.

Yet President Clinton opposes the balanced budget amendment. This is a rather noble position for him to take, considering that in its current form the amendment would be unlikely to take effect until after the end of his second term. He could have the cheap political advantage of supporting the balanced budget amendment at little or no practical cost. Instead, while many Republicans were for fiscal discipline in the abstract but not in the particular, Clinton seems to be for fiscal discipline in the particular but not in the abstract. That, politically, is the worst of both worlds.



In its campaign against the balanced budget amendment, which Congress will vote on once again this month, the administration has put out a document containing various nightmare scenarios of what it would take to achieve a balanced budget in the year 2000. The tax increases and/or spending cuts described therein are indeed politically unimaginable. The White House is right to note that the politicians pushing the balanced budget amendment do not spell out or endorse the specific consequences of such a requirement. The voters who are for it, by and large, do not appreciate what it would entail.

But the administration's nightmare scenarios "prove too much," as the lawyers like to say. They are not an argument against a balanced budget amendment. They are an argument against a balanced budget itself. Yet the very document containing them cautiously describes a balanced budget as "this laudable goal." When will "this laudable goal" ever be achieved if it is unthinkable to achieve it between now and the year 2000? By the administration's own economic assumptions, the year 2000 will mark nine years of continuous prosperity and growth. It will mark nearly two decades since the annual megadeficits began and almost a decade since serious work began to curtail them. If we cannot achieve a balanced budget in even a single year between now and 2000, we can never achieve one.

Far from proving the undesirability of a balanced budget amendment, then, the administration's nightmare scenarios show why it is—unfortunately—desirable. Yes, most of its noisiest supporters are disingenuous. Yes, under Clinton, great progress is being made on the deficit even without an amendment. Yes, there is no particular reason why government income and outgo should have to match in any particular year. Yes, a "balanced budget" is just an accounting concept, which depends on how you calculate it. Yes, it's a shame—and an ominous precedent—to clutter the Constitution. Yes, there are questions about how it would be enforced.

Nevertheless, the White House nightmare scenarios demonstrate that a new disciplinary mechanism is needed. Is it unreasonable to expect Americans ever, in any one year, to pay in full for what they demand from the government? Does anyone believe that failure to do so, continuously, year after year, is not harmful?

There are indeed people who argue this. They are mistaken. More important, though, they are a small fraction of those who oppose a balanced budget amendment, most of whom claim to support the goal but not the procedure, or only object to the rigidity of a mandated balanced budget every year. This large

continued on page 45

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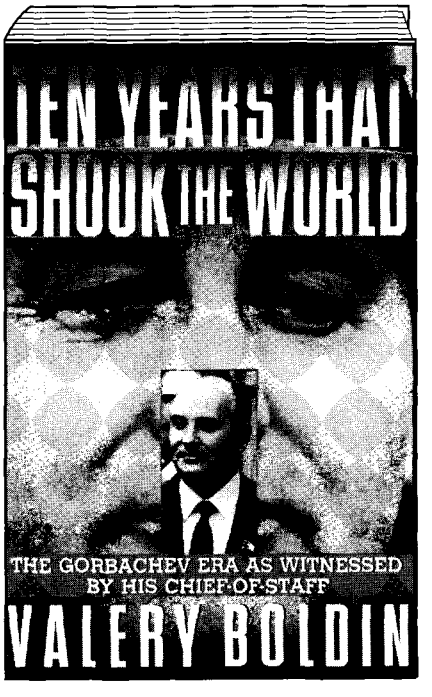

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MARCH 7, 1994

ATTENTION DEFICIT

There is much to admire in the budget President Clinton presented to Congress last week: it cuts the deficit to $176.1 billion, the lowest amount in ten years; it reduces spending on non-entitlement programs for the first time in twenty-five years; and it pays for investments in job training, education, highways, law enforcement and the environment not by increasing spending but by trimming or eliminating more than 300 federal spending programs.

In adhering to the spending limits set down in last year's budget agreement, the president has at last robbed the Republicans of one of their most cherished and politically effective barbs: that he is merely a tax-and-spender in New Democratic robes. Where spending is concerned, the president's budget is positively stingy (Democrats in the House and Senate are already bemoaning the cuts); and with the exception of the seventy-five-cent tax on cigarettes, there are no broad-based taxes to be found in its pages. In many ways this budget is a Republican's dream: it achieves the kinds of cuts that Ronald Reagan and George Bush constantly talked about, but never had the courage to propose.

So there is something a little ripe, if familiar, about Republican dismissals of the budget as a "sham" (Representative Christopher Shays), "an intricate shell game" (Senator Connie Mack) and an "MIA budget" (Senator Pete Domenici). If they have problems with the president's proposal, that's fine. Let them offer specific alternatives.

Of course, we're not without gripes of our own. There is, to begin with, something unseemly about Clinton's cheerful speeches proclaiming the deficit is under control. It isn't, and he knows it. This year's unexpected deficit dip is encouraging, but it is not permanent. For while Clinton's budget may be refreshingly free of Reagan-style magic asterisks and rosy scenarios, it does not quite live up to Budget Director Leon Panetta's boast that "what you see is what you get." For example, the budget leaves out of its calculations estimates of what Clinton's fledgling health care reform package will cost over the five or more years it will take before it begins to save money. This is not a minor omission: the Congressional Budget Office estimates that health care reform will add an additional $74 billion to the budget over the next six years—enough to send the proudly descending deficit back up the ladder.

That means Clinton will have to cut even more out of the budget than he already has if he wants to meet the yearly spending reductions mandated by last year's budget deal and still have money left over to cover the cost of his spending initiatives. Already he has precious little wiggle room. This budget squeezes $16 billion out of those few programs still within Clinton's easy political reach—a meager 1 percent of the total budget. And of that, only half goes to finance Clinton's modest investment program; the other half is earmarked for the deficit.

Clinton should set his eyes on the more lucrative savings buried in the 99.5 percent of the budget that remains largely unplundered. Our hit-list of cuts will come as no surprise to regular TNR readers (see "Supercuts," October 4, 1993); but they bear repeating. Clinton could save $10 billion to $20 billion per year by eliminating all agricultural subsidies (he takes aim only at the $50 million oilseed export subsidies); and another $1 billion by shuttering the Small Business Administration (instead of just shaving a scant $31 million in tree-planting and "earmarked grants"). He could pick up an additional $20 billion over five years by closing out mass transit and airport subsidies, and rake in tens of billions more by dipping into entitlements and freezing cost-of-living adjustments for wealthy Social Security recipients.

None of these cuts is politically palatable, and at least one—killing off agricultural subsidies—may be impossible to win. Clinton dislikes battles with Congress: during last year's vicious budget toss-up, he abandoned his proposals to lower grazing, mining and timber subsidies when Western senators balked. But eventually, the deficit will force Clinton to step on some feet. Even Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen says he sees another round of budget cuts on the horizon. And Clinton can't count on Congress to make them. He has admirably pledged to veto the balanced budget amendment if it lands on his desk, which means that he is willing to take responsibility for politically wrenching budget cuts. Clinton appears to recognize that these are the kinds of decisions that only a president, who is insulated from the intense pressures local constituents bring to bear on members of Congress, can make. The question is whether Clinton will choose to make deficit reduction the signature of his first two years, or the legacy of his entire presidency. •

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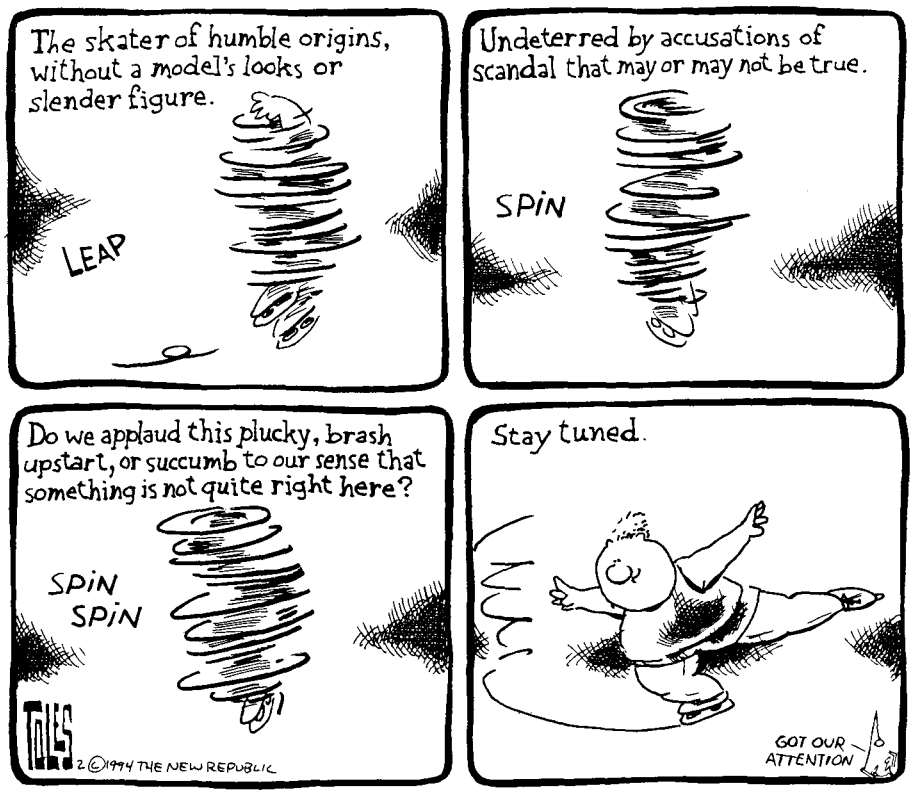
NOTEBOOK

HUMPTY DUMPTY HAD A GREAT FALL: The papers are beginning to reveal the decision-making process that led to President Clinton's lame response to the slaughter in Sarajevo last week. Of course, decision-making is a tricky business when it is designed to codify indecision. From a fine piece by Elaine Sciolino in *The New York Times*, we learn, not gladly, the following: that Clinton's instinct, when he learned of the mortar attack on February 5, "was to ask the allies what to do"; that the president asked his national security advisers "to report back to him the next afternoon" and went golfing; that David Gergen delivered an excellent performance as David Gergen and advised the president that he must "appear strong"; that the president refers to Sarajevo as the "Humpty Dumpty" of Bosnia, as if unaware of Mr. Dumpty's eventual fate; and that the administration is haunted by what one counselor called "the memory of Kuwait"—no, not the Gulf war, but the air strike last June to punish Iraq for the plot to assassinate George Bush. Can it really be that the administration's attitude toward the use of force will be dominated by that silly sideshow? The primary motivation of American policy still seems to be the fear of putting American soldiers on the bloodied Balkan ground, even as part of a peacekeeping force. The peace that may have to be kept, incidentally, is still discussed by the administration as a settlement between three guilty groups. There appears to be no interest in giving the Bosnians guns, to let them keep their own peace. And at this writing the Serbians around Sarajevo will suddenly be allowed to keep some of their guns. After all, we musn't hurt the Serbians' feelings, or Boris Yeltsin's.


The skater of humble origins, without a model's looks or slender figure.
LEAP
Undeterred by accusations of scandal that may or may not be true.
SPIN
Do we applaud this plucky, brash upstart, or succumb to our sense that something is not quite right here?
SPIN
SPIN
TOLES
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Stay tuned.
GOT OUR ATTENTION

FACTS FOR QUACKS: You've probably seen the T.V. ads on health care reform sponsored by the League of Women Voters Education Fund and the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation—they're the ones that righteously proclaim, "We're not backing any particular plan. We want decisions to be based on facts." There's even a toll-free number ("GET THE FACTS 1-800-FACTS-94"). Unfortunately the first "fact" publicized by the $4.1 million campaign is spurious. "A lot of people think that most uninsured Americans are poor and unemployed," intones the narrator. "In fact, 84 percent of Americans who lack health insurance are in families that work hard and pay taxes.... That's eight out of ten of us, and that's a fact." Wrong, on several counts. First, as George Will has pointed out, the "84 percent" is not "eight out of ten of us," but eight out of ten of the minority of "us" who are uninsured. Second, the statistics on which the ad is based don't show that 84 percent of uninsured families work "hard." In fact, the "84 percent" figure includes part-time and part-year workers along with full-time, full-year workers. And the statistics say nothing at all about paying taxes. They apparently just made that part up. Dr. Robert Blendon, the Harvard researcher cited by the League of Women Voters as an adviser, concedes that the ads contain a "mistake." A more accurate spot would say that about half (52.4 percent) of the uninsured live in families with a full-time, full-year worker. That number is bad enough. Why exaggerate?

HAIL AND FAREWELL: The vocation of the intellectual has fallen on terrible times, but it was honored by Christopher Lasch, who died last week at the impoverishingly early age of 61. He was one of America's great social critics. In a clear, learned, sober and independent voice, Lasch warned about the individual and social consequences of self-indulgence, about the surrender of the will to the therapeutic ideal, about the temptation of utopia, about the requirements of community (and the difference between the real kind and the fake kind). Lasch was not embarrassed to speak about "the good life" when he spoke about politics. He was a moralist, but not a scold; that is to say, he was not sentimental about the good life, he was rigorous about it. And he criticized his own congregation (in his instance, the American left), which is the mark of seriousness.

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"Democracy once meant opposition to every kind of double standard. Today we accept double standards—as always, a recipe for second-class citizenship—in the name of humanitarian concern," he wrote in an essay about shame in this magazine a few years ago. "The attempt to make people feel good about themselves only makes them cynical. 'Caring' is no substitute for candor." His lucidity was undimmed by his battle with cancer. "I don't experience my condition as wretched at all," he wrote to friends last summer. But the condition of American intellectual life is more wretched for his loss. •

THE FLAPJACK FILE

TOFU FLECKS

By Douglas G. McGrath

Friday, February 4, 1994

Being a Secret Service agent, I can handle tension, but the level around the White House recently has been intense. First Mr. Steph is missing. He hasn't been seen for four days. Apart from having an adverse effect on the local economy—White House tour attendance by teenage girls has fallen 76 percent—it worries the president. So today, Flapjack ordered a search. Mr. Gergy said this should be done by whoever isn't busy. Flap agreed, and we all wish Mr. Christopher and Mr. Lake Godspeed in finding him.

Second, the pressure for Flap to act in Bosnia mounts. After a terrible new attack today, Flap gave this statement: "The heavy shelling of Sarajevo keeps families together, sometimes in one closet. My administration is proud to sponsor policies that are pro-family." As we approached the Oval O., Agent Searle said, "If Flap only felt as outraged by Milosevic as he does by Brit Hume, Sarajevo would be saved." Just then, we overheard the Flap talking to Mrs. Rodham-Flap. We were amazed. "The situation is dire," he said. "We should've crushed the tyrant long ago. He threatens our vital interests and must be taken out." The Rod said, "*Finally!* I'm for air strikes." Flap said that sounded like too much. "It's the quickest," she said. The door opened and Flap came out, shaking his head. "Sweetheart, I know we don't like Jim Cooper, but we simply can't bomb the man." She chewed on her headband and glared at him. "After all," he said, "We won 56 percent of the vote in Tennessee."

Friday, February 11

The Roundtable, the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers all rejected Flap's health care proposal, so an emergency meeting was held with Mr. Magaziner.

The weird thing about the meeting with Mr. Magaziner is the usual weird thing about a meeting with Mr. Magaziner: Mr. Magaziner. As Ms. Reno said once after meeting him, "He is something to behold, though not to hold." He is pale and watery-eyed and wears a white lab coat and bicycle shorts. He started wearing those when Mr. Steph told him they were hip. Unfortunately, he wears them *over* his sweat pants. He keeps a pet ferret on his desk named Millhouse who holds a pen in its mouth in case Mr. Mag can't find his. And every surface, rug or tabletop in that office is covered with health care documents in stacks more than eight feet high.

The Flap got right to it. "Ira," he said, "thanks to the change-averse media and the me-first trickle-downers in the business community, everyday American folks out there believe our health plan is too complex and bureaucratic."

Mr. Mag rummaged through several hundred sheets of paper before plucking one out of a six-foot stack and handing it to Flap. "I don't know why people say that," he said, as the stack fell over backward and broke the window. "If someone has a heart attack, here's all they have to do to get help: they phone their regional alliance, make contact with the representative in charge of their specific area within the larger region—that would be their inner-regional regional alliance rep, or, if you want to have a little fun with it, their IRRAP...." He apparently thought that was funny, because he laughed here, a little curl of saliva flying in and out of his mouth, which finally stopped when he choked. "So you call your inner-regional regional alliance rep, explain your ailment, he faxes you a waiver, an income accountability form, a health history, a drug interaction exam and a fraud protection contract. You just fill these out, fax them back to the Forms Review Committee which, if they approve, will send you a list of doctors in your area—often as many as three to choose from, *it may even be someone you trust!*—and as soon as you get an appointment, you go in, give your federal genetic data-bank card and your eighteen-digit national health number and bam! That heart attack is history!" He pulled the pen out of Millhouse's mouth, stabbed a piece of his tofu brownie and swallowed it. That explained those blue marks on his lips. "It's all stated plain as can be in chapter 328, page 9,002."

Flap said, "9,003, Ira." Mr. Mag laughed again, choking a little on the brownie. "President knows best!" he said with a spray of tofu flecks. He stuck the pen in another piece of tofu and offered it to Flap. It's the first time I've ever seen Flap decline an offer to eat.

Saturday, February 12

Great news: we found Mr. Steph! He was trapped in the back of Mr. Mag's office under two collapsed file piles: file 3,456 ("What about Liposuction?") and file 6,213,590 ("How We're Keeping This Simple"). He and Flap took a walk tonight to review what Mr. Steph had missed. Flap took him to the pool, which has been treated with chicken fat and chemicals to remind him of his beloved river back home. "I'm ready to go ahead with bombing on Bosnia," he said, tossing a match on the sur-

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WELCOME TO THE '90S

Ever since the '80s ended we've been bombarded with the hollow journalistic catchphrase "Welcome to the '90s." You can find it wherever there's column space to be filled with cute little tales about the wacky world we live in—which is to say, just about everywhere.

Did people always write like this? There is no record of anyone in the media remarking, "Welcome to the High-Flying '80s" when the Reagans moved into the White House. No one wrote, "Welcome to the Self-Actualizing '70s" when Jonathan Livingston Seagull *was published. There was no collective cry of "Welcome to the Conspiracy-Theorizing '60s" following the Kennedy assassination. After Hitler annexed the Sudetenland, did pundits shake their heads and write, "Welcome to the Rearmed '30s"? Surely plague-ridden Europe was spared the indignity of town criers bellowing, "Welcome to the Bubonic 1340s." Students of ancient Rome have yet to uncover a text reading anything like "Welcome to the Visigothic 410s."*

So, how have some of our finest scribes characterized the decade? Here's a sampling:

"Welcome to the austere '90s." (*Orlando Sentinel Tribune*, 9/6/93)
"Welcome to the natural '90s." (*The Arizona Republic*, 6/20/93)
"Welcome to the high-tech '90s." (*Newsday*, 6/9/93)
"Welcome to the politically correct '90s." (*Chicago Tribune*, 4/28/93)
"Welcome to the gunk-free '90s." (*San Diego Union-Tribune*, 4/7/93)
"Welcome to the vivid '90s." (*Newsday*, 2/24/93)
"Welcome to the gay '90s." (*The Plain Dealer*, 2/16/93)
"Welcome to the practical '90s." (*Houston Chronicle*, 2/3/93)
"Welcome to the rustic '90s." (*Orlando Sentinel Tribune*, 10/31/92)
"Welcome to the frugal '90s." (*Orlando Sentinel Tribune*, 10/6/92)
"Welcome to the nervous '90s." (*Atlanta Journal & Constitution*, 8/1/92)
"Welcome to the downsized '90s." (*Houston Chronicle*, 2/20/92)
"Welcome to the liberated '90s." (*USA Today*, 7/29/91)
"Welcome to the trying '90s." (*Adweek*, 2/18/91)
"Welcome to the no-fun '90s." (*People*, 12/31/90)
"Welcome to the social-conscious '90s." (*Adweek*, 11/19/90)
"Welcome to the no-nonsense '90s." (*Money*, 5/90)
"Welcome to the responsible '90s." (*Marketing & Media Decisions*, 4/90)
"Welcome to the upside down '90s." (*Time*, 1/15/90)
"Welcome to the naive '90s." (*Newsday*, 1/6/90)
"Welcome to the '90s, where the only place you can get a bagful of freebies is a food bank." (*Toronto Star*, 9/6/93)
"Welcome to the '90s, where pathfinding the way to adulthood has many challenges." (*San Diego Union-Tribune*, 8/1/93)
"Welcome to the '90s and the era of commuter marriage." (*Los Angeles Times*, 6/25/93)
"Welcome to the '90s: aging boomers staying home, sipping chamomile, getting balmed and falling asleep." (*Seattle Times*, 2/11/92)
"Welcome to the '90s, leisure time grows more important." (*Atlanta Journal & Constitution*, 1/18/92)
"Welcome to the '90s, the decade of the home party." (*Chicago Tribune*, 12/1/91)
"Welcome to the '90s, the decade of collateral." (*Boston Globe*, 6/17/90)
"Welcome to the '90s, the decade of new fitness." (*Los Angeles Times*, 1/13/90)
"Welcome to the '90s, the decade of creative selling." (*American Salesman*, 8/91)
"Welcome to the '90s, the espresso age." (*Gannett News Service*, 6/7/93)
"Welcome to the '90s—book clubs are back." (UPI, 4/10/88)
"Welcome to the neon '90s." (UPI, 2/2/88)

ANDY AARON is a writer and television producer.

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face and watching a fire flare up. "I'm just waiting to see if Cliff Jackson will fall for that invitation I sent him for the Rhodes Scholar Reunion at the Sarajevo Hilton."

Mr. Steph nodded. "Any thoughts on how we can take Jim Cooper out?" he asked. Flap handed him a hanger with a marshmallow on it. "Hillary's at the Olympics now," he said.

"How does that help?" Mr. Steph asked.

"She's going to meet with Tonya Harding." Flap's marshmallow still had a little fire going when he popped it in his mouth.

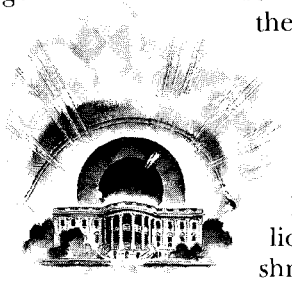
DOUGLAS G. MCGRATH is a frequent TNR contributor.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

GOING CELLULAR

By Fred Barnes

After President Clinton's two-hour meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa on February 11, a "senior American official" noted gingerly that Clinton was disappointed in Hosokawa's new economic stimulus package. In truth, Clinton had been far more blunt. When Hosokawa boasted his new tax cut was deeper (in the first year) than President Ronald Reagan's in 1981, Clinton didn't flinch. It's not enough, he declared flatly. The president also scolded Hosokawa for having a bad attitude on trade. Pulling out his copy of the ten-page Japanese-American trade "Framework" agreed on in Tokyo last July, Clinton pointed to the language about "objective criteria" for measuring progress in opening Japanese markets. It's right there on page 8, he indicated.



Clinton was going through the motions. The chance of a trade breakthrough with Japan was nil. That had been clear at least since January 24, when American and Japanese officials gathered across the street from the White House for a "deputies meeting." The Japanese offered no concessions on the main sticking point, the Clinton administration's contention that the only "objective criteria" for measuring Japanese imports are numerical benchmarks. The Japanese insisted these would become mandatory targets, thus producing not free trade but managed trade. Hosokawa pal Akitane Kiuchi, a former diplomat sent as the prime minister's personal envoy to meet with Clinton on February 8, brought no concessions either. Nor did Tsutomu Hata, the foreign minister, who talked to American officials two days later.

The president and his aides were poised to exploit the breakdown. There was no public hand-wringing. Instead they played up the "turning point" in Japanese-American relations. "We could have disguised our differences with cosmetic agreements," Clinton said at his press conference with Hosokawa. "But the issues between us are so important ... it is better to have reached no agreement than to have reached an empty agreement." The White House gave no thought to compromise. At a meeting in the Roosevelt Room before Hosokawa's visit, Clinton decided it was "important to hang tough," as one aide put it.

Everyone did, even when Hata made a strong case for giving Hosokawa time to change Japanese trade practices. Hata scheduled sessions with Vice President Al Gore, Christopher and counselor David Gergen. He argued that Hosokawa wants to open his markets to U.S. goods, but can't yet. Elected last July, he hasn't the political power. If he agrees to numerical targets for imports, it would be suicidal. His government would fall. Hata, says an American official, "was looking for someone to bend. Nobody bought into it. They heard it before."

The administration presented an unusually united front—all hard-liners. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor and Commerce Secretary Ron Brown had dealt with the Japanese, and were adamant about not giving an inch. (Kantor's breakfast with Hata was especially contentious.) Deputy Treasury Secretary Roger Altman and National Economic Council boss Robert Rubin had experienced rough going with the Japanese when they worked on Wall Street. They were in no mood to accommodate. "Altman is really tough on this," says a Clinton aide. Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen, the closest thing to a pure free-trader in the administration, had been turned off by the powerful influence of the Japanese government's permanent bureaucracy. Clinton's intransigence was buttressed by a series of anti-Japan memos, including one from Kantor and another from a former American trade official, to which the president added comments in the margin.

Hosokawa blew his only chance to win a few allies inside the administration when he watered down his stimulus program. Some devotees of macroeconomics, including officials at Treasury and on the Council of Economic Advisers, believe Japan's $60 billion trade surplus with the United States will shrink once Japanese consumers spend more. And one way to promote consumption is for Japan to cut taxes and stimulate its economy. Hosokawa's initial proposal might have done that. A permanent 7 trillion yen tax cut. But Hosokawa was forced to back down by others in his coalition. What he wound up with was a one-year tax cut of 6 trillion yen. Washington wasn't impressed. Clinton told Hosokawa the package didn't comply with what had been promised in July.

Contrary to what some Clinton aides suggested, the Japanese had never agreed with the American interpretation of "objective criteria." When this ambiguous phrase was inserted in the framework accord, American negotiators thought it meant numerical standards. A

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percentage would be set as the appropriate foreign share of, say, the Japanese auto parts market. But at the American press briefing in Tokyo outlining the accord, Japanese officials buttonholed reporters with their spin. Numerical targets hadn't been agreed on, they said. Hosokawa's negotiators stuck to this line. Clinton aides proposed putting language in a new treaty saying benchmarks would not become rigid goals that must be met. But Hosokawa said any target might "gain a life of its own." He couldn't go along.

Clinton was unfazed. For him, the trade spat was a winner politically no matter what Hosokawa decided. If the Japanese leader backed down, Clinton would have a treaty to tout, the best one ever. If Hosokawa didn't, the president could talk tough about finally standing up to Japan. This never would have worked in the early months of Clinton's presidency. He'd have been accused of blaming Japan for America's economic trouble and picking a fight to deflect attention from his own problems. Now, with the U.S. economy growing and his popularity rising, Clinton is in perfect position to confront the Japanese. After the NAFTA fight, this will help repair his ties to labor and liberals. He has the luxury of waiting for the Japanese, their economy in shambles, to buckle.

There's a downside. Except for trade, Clinton said, "our relationship is in good shape." This is a little like saying, "Aside from the assassination, Mrs. Lincoln had a great evening at Ford's Theater." The economic link is the heartline between the United States and Japan. American sanctions—the first, for cellular phones, were announced February 15—may prompt retaliation, causing a trade war harmful to the U.S. economy. "We've got to be very careful," says a Clinton adviser. Very careful. •

BELFAST POSTCARD

THE TROUBLES

By Jonathan Stevenson

Among the warehouses of conflict now pockmarking the globe, Northern Ireland is a boutique. Fewer than 100 people per year die as a result of political violence, mostly in areas clearly staked out by paramilitaries; garden-variety murder victims number only a handful. Ulster denizens are always gobsmacked to hear it from an American, but the fact is, Belfast is a nice place. Unlike Somalia or Bosnia, Cambodia or Miami, Belfast embodies a civil society in full bloom. You can buy a fine house for $45,000, and finance 95 percent of the price at less than 5 percent. The supermarkets are modern, the wine importers sophisticated. Thanks to the British government, which pumps about $4.5 billion per year into Northern Ireland, Belfast enjoys a generous dole and overpolicing. In general, the streets are far safer than any comparable American city's. The drug problem has not yet kicked in: the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) still worries about marijuana it solemnly calls "skunk weed."

Ask a passerby whether the "Troubles" will ever end, and he'll shake his head and mutter, "Ach, no." But his smile will radiate a resignation that says, we're all in this together, so let's talk politics. Everybody does, and with an alacrity that transcends mere friendliness. This city sports what may be the world's most microscopically informed and politically enlivened population.

Constant street banter, of course, has its drawbacks. On the subject of the Troubles, the sheer vanity, self-importance and myopia of the media are unrivaled. IRA attacks claimed eighty-five lives in 1993, yet Jim McDowell, a local pundit, had the nerve last fall to compare north and west Belfast to the Cambodian "killing fields." London's *Independent* has referred to the "genocide" and "ethnic cleansing" of Catholics.

Why do the Northern Irish nourish demagogues and perpetuate tit-for-tat violence? The Troubles animate otherwise isolated and ordinary lives. In a video rental shop, the cashier will ask eagerly whether you've seen *In the Name of the Father*, the movie about the vindication of supposed IRA bombers. Several years ago, the Troubles drew Mickey Rourke and his IRA tattoo here to film a trashy IRA vehicle, *A Prayer for the Dying*. The Northern Irish are a people afflicted by the Stockholm Syndrome: hostages enamored of captors who have brought them the limelight.

Lately, the conflict seems to have bolted free from the usual inertia. Though an atavistic October that saw twenty-three sectarian killings impeded a Catholic peace initiative, in December the British and Irish governments issued a joint declaration endorsing self-determination. Unfortunately, the proclamation simply begged anew the ancient question: What is the "self" to be "determined"? The Protestant unionists say it's only Northern Ireland, which should vote to stay in the United Kingdom. The Catholic nationalists claim it's the whole island, which should fold Ulster back into the Republic of Ireland.

By now most Americans who read know that Gerry Adams is the head of Sinn Fein, the disingenuously coy front party for the illegal IRA. Adams did hard time for terrorist bombing in the '70s, but now, bearded and studious, he assumes the countenance of a fretful warrior ennobled by battle. The facade convinced President Clinton to grant him a forty-eight-hour visa to attend a "peace conference" in New York, where Adams stoked First Amendment fires by decrying the British ban on news broadcasts of his voice. James Molyneaux, head of the Ulster Unionist Party—by far the province's largest—stayed away from the conference on the theory that public debate would only dignify a criminal.

Many Protestants here believe that in abstaining,

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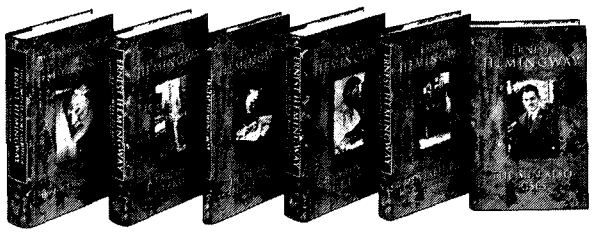
Permanent Pleasures



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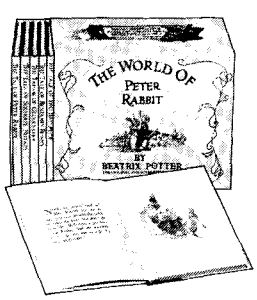

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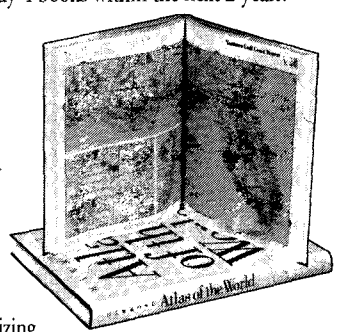

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B.	Popular Fiction (Peter Benchley, Anne Tyler, James Michener)	1	2	3	4	5
C.	History, Biography, Politics	1	2	3	4	5
D.	Self Help (How-To, Health, Human Behavior, Language)	1	2	3	4	5
E.	Scholarly Books (Philosophy, Science, Religion, Classics, Poetry, Reference)	1	2	3	4	5
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their leaders missed an opportunity to inform an American public bathed in Irish Catholic partisanship about some of the suppressed realities of the Troubles. "It was a bloody whitewash, so it was," says Jim Hewitt, the ruddy owner of Drum Sounds, a loyalist paraphernalia shop in the densely Protestant neighborhood Sandy Row. "The Irish Catholics take the Troubles with them, and start clubs and NORAID [the American support group for Irish nationalists]. Irish Protestants don't." But on their home turf, Prods are jealous. Unionist politicians, Hewitt barks, "have done nothing for the Protestant working class." Half a block from Drum Sounds, a mural of the paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force's (UVF) insignia covers a building. Catty-corner, beneath a stallion-bound King William of Orange, whose forces planted Protestant hegemony in Ulster in 1690, a painted scroll reads: "The Loyalist People of Sandy Row Remember with Pride the 300th Anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne. No Surrender."

"Loyalist" designates the most reactionary unionists, including violent outlaw organizations such as the UVF. They derive their inspiration from historical triumphs. But most Protestants, says a Sandy Row storekeeper, "just fear that we'll be downtrodden" by a Catholic-dominated Ireland. He maintains that successful government affirmative action programs for Catholics show that any reciprocal Catholic fear is unjustified.

Sympathy with the Prod cause in the States might have materialized had their spokesmen fired a few shots: Protestants are a majority in Northern Ireland. The IRA is only 300 to 500 strong. It has killed more Catholics than the Protestant paramilitaries have, and routinely kneecaps undisciplined members. At most, 20 percent of the Catholic population vote Sinn Fein, and even fewer actively support the IRA. There are far more Catholic unionists than there are Protestant nationalists. The Republic of Ireland has the worst economy in the E.C. and could not maintain the Northern Irish in the manner to which Britain has accustomed them. All these revelations would support the view, advanced by Belfast journalist Malachi O'Doherty, that "allowing the IRA to dictate British policy is like letting the Mafia give orders to the NYPD."

So what are unionist leaders afraid of? Charisma. "They're better off going by themselves than against Adams head-to-head," concedes Hewitt. The unionists are bland; Adams is a rock star. Unionist leader Ian Paisley agreed to sit for a portrait commissioned by a Belfast art gallery, but after a year on prominent display, nobody offered to buy it and the gallery put it up for public auction. Adams, by contrast, was featured in *Esquire* and graced "Larry King Live," "Good Morning America" and the "MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour." Even peaceable Protestants grudgingly concede the IRA's folk-hero status.

While Protestants dominate civil authorities, Catholics manage to make them look silly. Last year, three Sinn Fein protesters filed a preposterous lawsuit against the RUC for use of excessive force during a demonstration at a 1991 Belfast City Council meeting. "Is it not true that in 1973 you were convicted of a terrorist bombing?" asked the haughty establishment lawyer at trial. "No, that is absolutely untrue," answered a plaintiff, who had been called as a witness. "Really?" asked the lawyer in mock incredulity. "The year was 1974," said the witness, deadpan. Boffo punchline. Laughter from the gallery. The RUC won the case, but Sinn Fein got the wise-ass cachet.

The Protestants aren't without jokes of their own. One concerns IRA bomber Thomas Begley, who blew himself up along with nine Protestants in a bombing last October. His mother is escorted by police into the morgue to identify his body, which is arrayed in pieces on a metal slab. The cop picks up the head and asks, "Is that your son?" "No," she responds. "He was taller than that."

As the Troubles charge the local dialogue and jade the common folk, Gerry Adams will inscrutably await "clarification" of the joint declaration, elevated by the tacit threat of IRA violence. The unionist politicians will stay nondescript and aloof. And the people of Northern Ireland will retain the dubious title of the world's most cheerful civil combatants.

JONATHAN STEVENSON is writing a book about Somalia.

Dump the bottom-up review.

DOWN THE HATCH

By Eliot A. Cohen

The Clinton administration has had such a wretched time with the defense establishment that one can understand its eagerness to declare its fundamental business with the Pentagon done. Perhaps this explains why, even after the departure of Les Aspin, the administration remains committed to the former secretary's blueprint for defense policy: the so-called "bottom-up review," which was introduced amid considerable publicity in October 1993. Embraced by William J. Perry, Aspin's deputy and now his successor, the review calls for a force structure not much smaller than that planned for by the Bush administration, albeit with an 8 percent reduction in planned expenditures. Its distinguishing premise is the idea that the United States will stand prepared to fight two major regional wars—a Korean war and a conflict with a rearmed Iraq—nearly simultaneously.

For an administration that prides itself on modernity and innovation, the bottom-up review is a remarkably conservative and intellectually timid document. It was devised largely from the following imagined situation: an opponent, conveniently armed with the weapons of the Gulf war and with forces the size of Saddam Hussein's, would attack an innocent but loyal Ameri-

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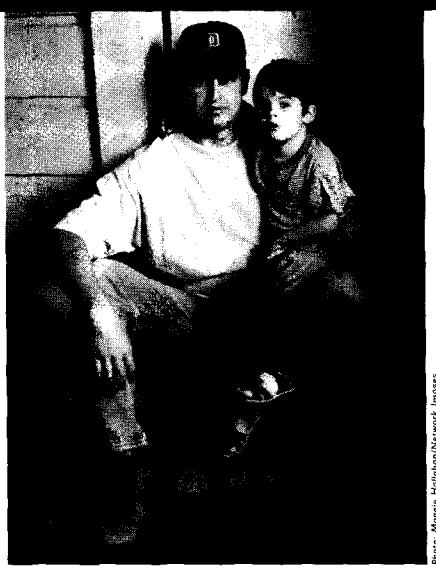
Most are working people and their families.



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While many are aware that 37 million Americans are without health insurance on any given day, few realize that the number of people affected during the course of a year is actually much higher. Last year, over 50 million people — one out of every five Americans — were uninsured at some point during the year.

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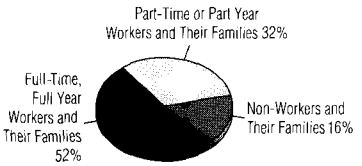
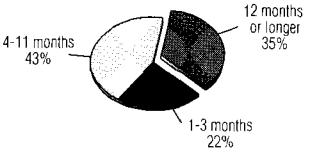

Part-Time or Part Year Workers and Their Families 32%
Full-Time, Full Year Workers and Their Families 52%
Non-Workers and Their Families 16%

Eight out of ten Americans without health insurance are in working families.

Source: The Urban Institute analysis of 1993 CPS, Census Bureau.



Of the more than 50 million Americans without insurance during a year, one in three are uninsured for at least a year.

Source: Lewin/VHI analysis of 1990 SIPP, Census Bureau

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ican ally who would call for help. The scenario is an analytic tool favored by the systems analysts who rose to power in Robert McNamara's Pentagon, and it offers a seemingly realistic way of assessing military requirements. After all, why not structure forces by laying out precisely the forces needed to fight a war?

Alas, strategy is not so simple a business. Analysts, and not merely generals, like to fight the last battle. Unfortunately, their opponents don't. The Gulf war is just one kind of conflict in which the United States might find itself. More important, if Hussein's defeat taught America's foes anything, it was that they should *not* replicate the Iraqi strategy. Massed tank armies are not the way to take over small countries that happen to be American allies—far better to launch ambiguous takeovers behind the smoke screen of liberation movements or uncontrolled dissident groups or native putsch-makers. Invaders cognizant of Iraqi mistakes will make sure they intermingle their forces with civilians to render American bombing politically unattractive, mine and sabotage the ports where American forces disembark and (above all) brandish the nuclear weapons they will build, buy or steal during the coming decade. In these ways, America's opponents ten years hence will surely have found other, less comfortable ways of securing success than by imitating Saddam Hussein. Indeed, as General Mohamed Farah Aideed has demonstrated in Somalia, they already have.

Two other, even deeper flaws make the bottom-up review an unacceptable, and possibly dangerous basis for defense policy. The BUR promises the American people a capability to fight two regional wars at the same time, something that will be beyond the physical capacity of our military for five to ten years. American airlift and sealift simply could not move the bottom-up review force to two simultaneous wars, nor could the United States shuttle forces from a war in one corner of the globe to a war in another without pause for refitting, retraining or rest. The Gulf war, which engaged the bulk of America's tanking and airlift aircraft, and almost all of some key assets (the F-117 stealth fighter, for example), offers a cautionary tale in this regard.

Even worse, the BUR force is just plain unaffordable. Admiral Bobby Ray Inman pointed this out in a little-noted portion of his ill-fated news conference. Every secretary of defense has promised to save tens of billions of dollars annually by putting into place efficient procurement practices unaccountably rejected by his predecessors. Perhaps Perry, a smart and bureaucratically skilled Pentagon veteran, will finally be the one to deliver, thereby making the projected force affordable. But it is more likely that defense acquisition will remain as costly, clumsy and inefficient as the activity—war—that it exists to support. And some of the impulses that make for costly procurement, including the desire to spread defense dollars around congressional constituencies and to avoid even minor financial irregularities by imposing costly oversight procedures, will surely persist despite his best efforts.

The size of the BUR military, if the administration attempts to preserve it, may soothe a defense establishment that has already undergone dramatic cuts. To be sure, our forces will look formidable enough, with ten active Army and three Marine divisions, twelve aircraft carriers and thirteen active Air Force wings. But it will be a military that will defer replacing major capital items such as helicopters and tanks; at some point, ten or fifteen years from now, it will face a massive junking of obsolescent gear. It will also be a military that in order to keep overall numbers and salaries up—and to pay for such activities as peacekeeping and environmental cleanup (together about $5 billion per year)—will find itself running short of training dollars and ammunition stockpiles. Indeed, some American forces in Europe and elsewhere have already started reducing readiness rates and curtailing training in response to their limited funds.

The Defense Budget Project, the most thorough neutral observer of the defense debate, argues that when the bottom-up review force levels out in 1998 with a budget of $234 billion per year in 1994 dollars, it will face a $20-billion-per-year shortfall in procurement of new systems to replace older ones. Worse, the review figures failed to take into account such budget-busting items as a congressionally mandated 2.2 percent pay increase to the military, or the tendency of support costs such as maintenance and repair to rise over time. Small wonder, then, that the services have begun discussing quietly cutting force structure further, by dropping an Army division or two, a couple of Air Force wings and even one or two carriers. Such cuts would make the practically impossible two contingency strategy undoable—even in theory.

A closer look at the bottom-up review, however, reveals not only its flaws, but perhaps a deeper malady in the formulation of American strategy—a reflection of a bigger problem than one administration's difficulty in finding its way. This shell game would make little difference if the United States could ignore the prospect of having to fight wars. But can it? Sooner or later the United States will face upheavals overseas that cannot be accommodated or negotiated away. It may be a Ukrainian civil war induced by Russian nationalists who wish to unite with their motherland. It might be a war on the Korean peninsula. It might be an Islamic fundamentalist takeover in Algeria or Egypt (or both) that creates new waves of instability in the Middle East. It might be the collapse of the Iraqi state following the death of Saddam Hussein or a dramatic reassertion of Iranian power in the Persian Gulf. It could be a spread of the hitherto confined Yugoslav violence. And this is only in the short term. In the longer term the United States must consider more daunting possibilities—a world in which China becomes an assertive Asian power, perhaps provoking a Japanese nuclear response, or a world in which nuclear weapons are not merely developed but occasionally used, or a world in which the former Soviet

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Striking a Balance

For years, the books assigned in junior high and high school literature classes were pretty standard. Most kids read *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Macbeth* and maybe, as a bow to American content, *The House of Seven Gables*. And few asked how these books got their status as "classics" or why they kept it. All that has changed. The literature curriculum is currently undergoing some serious scrutiny—and that's a good thing. Kids should read more books of quality that are also representative of our history and our multi-ethnic society and culture. But what do we mean by "representative"? If we are dropping *Silas Marner*, how do we decide what takes its place?

If we are dropping *Silas Marner* from the curriculum, how do we decide what takes its place?

The answer some multiculturalists are giving would get rid of one set of stereotypes only to replace them with another. Instead of a distorted picture of non-European groups, kids will get a distorted picture of white Americans. This is a change but it's no improvement, and there is a good chance it will intensify the hostility that already exists among some groups.

Sandra Stotsky, who is a research associate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, raises some important questions about the new multicultural criteria for literature in "The Changing Literature Curriculum in K-12" (*Academic Questions*, Winter 1993-94).

Stotsky agrees that the traditional curriculum is too narrow:

> ...all students should be able to see the multi-ethnic nature of the country they inhabit...in the literature they are asked to read. They should also be able to see different ethnic and racial groups in major roles in this literature.

However, she has seen enough to be worried about an increasing tendency to pick works that engage in reverse stereotyping. Multiculturally "correct" books of this kind take up the cause of suffering racial and ethnic minorities by depicting white characters only in terms of the injustices committed by whites. White Americans are always and only shown as the greedy, mean and racist rulers of a rotten society. Ugly caricatures like these allow no room for individuals who do not conform to the stereotype or for the ongoing struggle to get rid of prejudice and injustice.

It's not that good books offering a balanced treatment of African-American or Asian relations with the white majority don't exist, Stotsky says. However, negative portrayals are far more welcome. Moreover, the range of ethnic groups portrayed is likely to be very narrow—African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians and Native Americans only. And there is no room for stories of immigrants who found their experiences here "liberating, and personally fulfilling, despite prejudice, discrimination and exploitation." The story of an individual who is able to persevere through adversity and take advantage of some of the good things our society offers is likely to be ignored because it conflicts with the stereotype of minorities as helpless victims.

In the multicultural curriculum Stotsky describes, books that find no redeeming good in American society are often accompanied by writing assignments that invite students to make their own contributions to the nasty picture. Minority students are encouraged to feel victimized—and morally superior—by describing incidents in which they "felt discriminated against" or "injustices perpetrated against their ancestors." And students who can't recount any such experience? Presumably, they feel morally inferior because of their privilege.

Selecting works of literature that present the American experience and American society in the worst possible light could have a number of bad consequences. Do we really want to encourage minority youngsters to focus only on the wrongs done to their group? Is it useful for them to see their identity primarily in terms of victimhood? And what of the non-minority students? A steady diet of books that inevitably portray their group as the villain could, Stotsky says, create self-loathing, as well as shame about their group and its heritage. It could also lead to the opposite—and this would be even worse. "How much shame and guilt," Stotsky wonders, "[can] white students ... absorb before becoming hostile to the groups depicted in 'white-guilt' literature?" Whatever the response of students, a curriculum of the kind Stotsky describes would exacerbate hatreds and tensions among groups.

Is Stotsky saying that students should never read books that portray white Americans as bigoted and greedy? Not at all, provided there are also texts that present "positive interaction between peoples of different racial or ethnic groups in this country" and that acknowledge the existence of "greed, racism, religious bigotry [and] the existence of slavery or forced labor in non-Western countries or among 'people of color.'" If American kids learn in literature class that members of minority groups can never be anything but noble victims, whereas whites are always and only oppressors, we will not have widened our literature curriculum. We will have tragically narrowed it.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1994 by Albert Shanker.

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Union becomes a maelstrom of violence along the lines of Bosnia, but raised to a new magnitude.

Such a new world demands a far more measured, comprehensive and even drastic rethinking of defense policy than that enshrined in the BUR. Early in its tenure the Eisenhower administration created three competing and senior working groups to draft three different strategies—differentiated by purpose and approach, and not simply by cost—which were then argued out before the president in the White House solarium. An even more thorough version of such an exercise merits consideration. American national security discourse rarely acknowledges the reality of choice and the costs of doing one thing rather than another. But rarely has American national security policy faced so many fundamental choices, and so few obvious answers.

There are many different kinds of force the United States might decide to acquire, but the choices are obscured by the Gulf war-oriented BUR. For example, the analysts who concocted the bottom-up review ignored one of the truly radical departures of the Gulf war: the reality of a carefully considered American surprise attack, launched not to stop an invasion but to reverse its effects. The BUR, while formally abjuring the strategic posture of the cold war, wound up accepting one of its outdated assumptions: namely, that the United States would always fight an operationally defensive war. In fact, it is just as likely, as in the Gulf or now in Bosnia, that the United States will find itself weighing an intervention to reverse a fait accompli, to prevent a disaster or to excise a menace. If the operational (as opposed to the political) purpose of our military becomes one not of defense but of offense, its force structure may need to look very different. Rather than concentrate on forward stationing of equipment for armored divisions, for example, it might find ways to augment the airborne firepower it can bring to bear from remote bases and carriers. Such painful tradeoffs do not appear in the review's list of the forces needed for a major regional contingency—roughly equal proportions of Army, Navy, Marine and Air Force units.

By focusing on a rearmed Iraq and an aggressive North Korea, the BUR looks ahead five years, or ten at most. That is probably too short a time for fundamental thinking about defense. Does the American military need to develop advantages now to cope with potential large competing countries in the future, or is its future handling the North Koreas and Iraqs? It is impolitic and perhaps alarming to think of other countries as military rivals, but given the lead time involved in the creation of military forces—decades, in some cases—there is little choice.

By virtue of its constricted and short-term methodology, the bottom-up review brings the defense debate to premature closure. There are many questions that require much more debate. Consider, for example, the American style of creating military systems. Since World War II the United States military has increasingly favored large, sophisticated systems, from aircraft carriers to intelligence satellites, airliners carrying radar for ground and air surveillance to the latest model attack helicopters. Critics sneered at complicated, expensive high-tech weapons, but their creators were vindicated in the Gulf war. Yet one must ask whether over the next twenty or thirty years the technological tide of the information revolution will turn in favor of smaller packages of discrete weapons (intelligent mines or cruise missiles, for example) that may require a completely different style of development and acquisition, tactics and operations.

Another issue that a strategy review should put on the table is the very nature of the armed services. The current wisdom holds that a new era of jointness has arrived. This is a praiseworthy goal, but within limits. The time has come to consider the merits of induced competition as well—after all, one of the most remarkable and useful technological achievements of the cold war was the invention of the Polaris submarine, a product of the Navy's attempt to take part of the nuclear mission away from the Air Force. Beyond this, however, the very nature of the services demands a hard look. Should separate services exist for space and special operations? Each of the services has restructured internally, but there has not been an overall view of the relationship among them. Nor has the functioning of the office of the secretary of defense received a thoroughgoing examination.

Perhaps the most subtle challenges to the military stem from internal issues of culture, including work habits and promotion practices. The American military worked during the cold war at wartime speed. It is a pace that is not suitable for reflection, study and experimentation. A military that operated at a far more relaxed pace in the 1920s and 1930s produced a generation of leaders who had thought deeply and imaginatively about their profession and innovated successfully when war came. How do we breed a similar generation of officers? Since World War II, the American military personnel system has sent officers on relatively brief tours of two or three years, rotating between staff and line. It is not clear that these rigid practices make sense in building an adaptable military. One of the most innovative soldiers in modern history was the nineteenth-century Prussian chief of the general staff, Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, who never commanded a unit larger than an infantry company, and who learned about the potential of a technology with dramatic military possibilities by serving on the board of a railroad company. In the American military's personnel system today he might easily have missed promotion to colonel because of the first, and could have found himself the subject of legal investigation, disgrace and dismissal as a result of the second. To be sure, there's no chance of the military returning to the polo-playing leisure of interwar days, but it can afford to ease up on a pace that even in peacetime causes marriages

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to crack. We should do everything we can to let the psychological demobilization of the cold war catch up with the physical acts of shutting bases and disbanding units.

Institutional inertia has its advantages. It contributed, for example, to America's ability to stay the course in the cold war. But once in a while the times require a fundamental rethinking of this country's military posture, a reconsideration that the bottom-up review does not provide. While great changes usually take place in the heat of crisis and impending war, wouldn't it be better to undertake them now, during our troubled peace? •

Strobe's world.

THE MASTER OF THE GAME

By Charles Lane

On an April day in 1967 columnist James Reston of *The New York Times* visited the campus of Yale College. The protests at Yale had been quieter than at most places, so Reston came to prove that the anti-Vietnam War movement was not just "weirdies and beardies." Respectable students were involved, too. Exhibit A was Nelson Strobridge Talbott III, "a clean-cut, solemn, serious, patriotic, progressive Republican type." His opposition to the war seemed a matter of mature concern for the national interest, and the tone of the national debate, not mere adolescent moralism. As Talbott told Reston, "I do not want to help pillory the present administration. I am interested to see if there are new means and attitudes by which this university—and hence the university community in general—can make discussion less polemical and more meaningful, and at the same time help the search for peace."

Talbott has written since of the nation's "traumatic memory" of Vietnam, but for him those years were free of trauma. It was a time in which he assumed the identity expected of him as son and namesake of Nelson Strobridge Talbott Jr., Cleveland investment banker and chum of the Republican Tafts. Strobe Talbott wasted no time on failure, introspection or rebellion. "Though he was our age, he always seemed much, much older," says Hannah Achtenberg, a fellow student in those years. From Hotchkiss and Yale, where his father and grandfather had also studied, Talbott went on to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, then to a job in Eastern Europe for *Time* magazine, where he worked for the next twenty-two years as White House correspondent, diplomatic correspondent, Washington bureau chief and editor-at-large.

His memories of being shaped by the turbulent '60s seem only to underscore his actual insulation. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, he and the rest of the Hotchkiss boys were summoned to the chapel to pray for peace. "A vivid memory of our sixteenth year—along with proms, high school sports and our first driver's license—was the prospect of instant obliteration," Talbott and his friend, political scientist Michael Mandelbaum, wrote in an essay for their Yale twenty-fifth class reunion. In a *Time* essay he wrote in 1992 to defend his friend and fellow Rhodes Scholar Bill Clinton from charges of draft-dodging, Talbott recalled another epiphany: Clinton and housemate Frank Aller, a draft resister, arguing the issue so heatedly they lost track of time while basting a Thanksgiving turkey.

Talbott himself secured a medical deferment thanks to a letter to his draft board from a friendly orthopedist in Cleveland. He later confessed to "a moral discomfort bordering on guilt" about the trick knee that kept him "out of the Mekong Delta, but not the squash courts and playing fields of Oxford." He and Mandelbaum conceded that "it took more intellectual and political courage to support [the war] than to oppose it," given the campus mood of the times. But Talbott had opted for a Clintonian gambit: he kept his ties to his establishment elders, without alienating his friends or breaking ranks with his generation. He protested the war, but in a calibrated way. "At Yale, he was not an organizer of events, not even teach-ins," recalls classmate and brother-in-law Derek Shearer. "He did not participate in marches." In the essay with Mandelbaum, Talbott claimed to have written a *Yale Daily News* editorial endorsing Eugene McCarthy for president. Talbott is writing a larger role for himself in the rebellious history of his generation than he actually played: in fact, the paper's endorsement editorial was written by Alan Boles, a junior.

Today, Nelson Strobridge Talbott III is poised to assume the stewardship of American foreign policy. During a jog on the beach during the Renaissance Weekend in Hilton Head, South Carolina, in 1992, President-elect Clinton invited Talbott to be his special envoy to the former Soviet Union. After a year in that

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post, Talbott has been nominated to be deputy secretary of state. Traditionally the number two at State has either focused on department management or on issues the secretary himself doesn't want to deal with. But in the Clinton administration, Friends of Bill are usually more important than their bosses. Talbott's assignment is to give the administration's floundering statecraft a new direction and a more polished spokesman. He is the favorite to succeed Secretary of State Warren Christopher when the appointed hour arrives.

The intellect and probity of this product of elite institutions are not, and should not be, in doubt. His competence, his geniality and his remarkable discipline have won him the power and admiration for which he always seemed destined. "Strobe believes that by doing right in the world, America enhances its own strength," says author Walter Isaacson, a former colleague at *Time*. Such a view is not incorrect, but what exactly does it mean? For all his glittering credentials, even Talbott's friends fall back on platitudes to describe what he stands for.

At 47, Talbott has perfected the Clintonian art of squaring circles. His thinking is analytic rather than empirical, pragmatic rather than idealistic, though it pretends to idealism. While he takes moral positions, he prefers to defend them in the language of national self-interest. His characteristic prescription is one that lets the country keep its options open, while meritocratic elites, at "the highest levels," keep the state afloat. Thus, in 1986, during the ferocious Nicaragua debate—a time, like Vietnam, when friendships were ending over the issue—Talbott urged Congress to grant military aid to the contras, but if and only if it were used as a form of pressure to win diplomatic concessions from the Sandinistas. Partnership for Peace, the Clinton administration's security framework for the new Europe, "can go either way," in Talbott's recent phrase. If Russia turns aggressive, we can let the Eastern European countries into NATO; if not, we might let the Russians in, too.

But Talbott's worldview is not all compromise. Two lodestars have remained fixed throughout his carefully measured career. The first is the mystique of Russia. Talbott is a passionate student of Russian language and poetry. He translated Nikita Khrushchev's two-volume memoirs for *Time* while still at Oxford, and has written or co-written six books on U.S.-Soviet relations. Yet for all the depth of Talbott's Russophilia, its origins seem puzzlingly serendipitous. Though Talbott has visited the country often, he never lived there for more than a few months at a time—in part due to a KGB ban imposed because he worked on the smuggled Khrushchev papers.

Rather, he has lived for years in the Russia of his imagination. The origins of this enthusiasm lie in an experience that seems to have been a cross between youthful indulgence and the flowering of a mature, but not exactly flamboyant, aesthetic sensibility. As a tenth-grader at Hotchkiss, Talbott was assigned to an English class taught by an inspiring young man named Clinton Ely. Ely also happened to teach Russian and Russian literature to eleventh-graders, and he recruited Talbott to join his class the next year. Young Strobe became "enraptured and fascinated," recalls Ely, with whom Talbott has remained friends ever since. "We both felt there was just something magical about Russia."

The fascination deepened at Yale. As his mother wished, Talbott started out pre-med, but turned to journalism and Russian studies after he did poorly in chemistry. As a Yale senior he wrote a 256-page thesis, "Fyodor Tyutchev: Poet of Privacy," about an ardent pan-Slavist who once wrote: "Russia cannot be known with the mind, cannot be gauged with some general measure.... In Russia, it is only possible to believe." In Tyutchev, Talbott found a character whose career had a particular resonance for the romantic but career-minded Yalie. Tyutchev was a minor aristocrat and diplomat who, after losing a package of secret codes in Switzerland, was fired from the foreign service and wound up later as a toady in the imperial court. As a reward for an essay in which he had called on the West to join with reactionary Russia against the forces of reform in Europe, Tyutchev was appointed by Czar Nicholas I to a commission in charge of censoring foreign publications. "Neither before or since has the Russian autocracy had a more loyal bard," writes Joseph Brodsky. Tyutchev is said to have been one of Lenin's favorite poets as well.

Tyutchev's contempt for the masses would find a faint, but unmistakable, echo in Talbott's own career. The second concept around which Talbott's intellectual system revolves is the special, anointed role of elites. *At the Highest Levels*, the title of his recent study (with Michael Beschloss) of George Bush, Mikhail Gorbachev and the end of the cold war, could be Talbott's credo. The participation in the affairs of foreign policymakers by lobbies, Congress or an unruly public has long annoyed Talbott. In an August 1992 *Time* column, for instance, he took China's and Bush's side in the debate over Most Favored Nation status for Beijing—even as Clinton campaigned against Bush's coddling of the butchers of Tiananmen Square:

> Once again those would-be statesmen on Capitol Hill are trying to micromanage American foreign policy and legislate morality in another country—something Congress does often and badly.... The whole episode is a vivid reminder of the uneasy, often unhelpful interaction between U.S. politics and foreign policy, especially in an election year. Politicians are quick to embrace simple positions on complex issues that make them feel good and look good—but in fact make a bad situation worse.

His admirers construe his elitism as virtue, calling him the lineal descendant of the "Wise Men"—the centrist, internationalist mandarins who shaped postwar American foreign policy. "Strobe is part of the honest foreign policy tradition that began with Elihu Root and Henry Stimson, and runs through Paul Nitze and Cyrus Vance," says Isaacson, himself an admiring chronicler of the "Wise Men."

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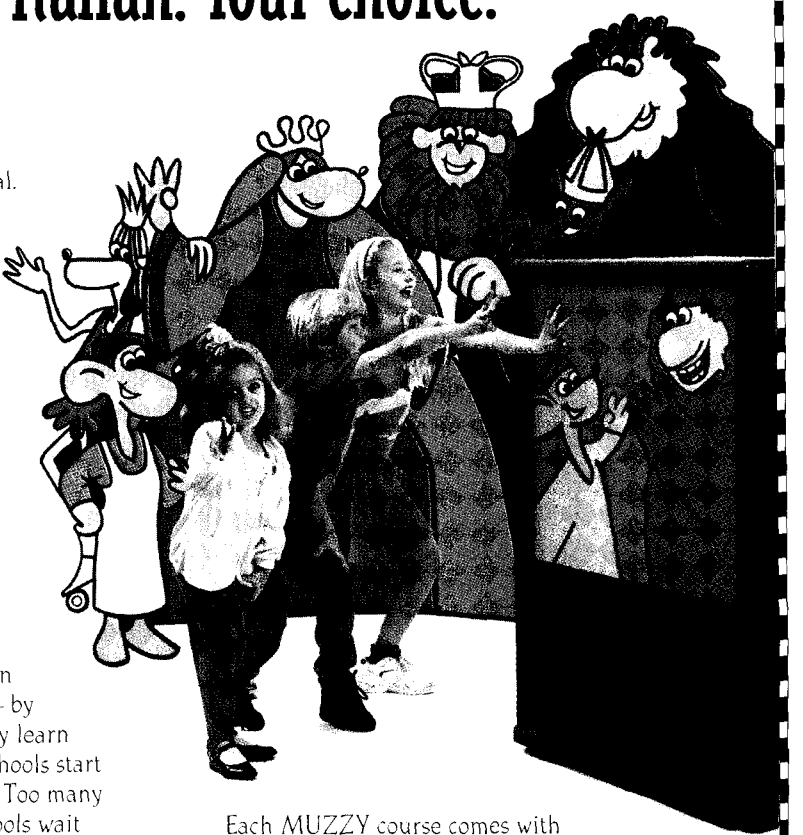

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It's a peculiar encomium for a journalist. At *Time*, Talbott's stories were almost entirely free of any insurgent spirit. His writing about George Kennan, Cyrus Vance, et al., was always reverent. Sometimes it was worshipful. In the preface to *The Master of the Game*, his critical but admiring biography of Paul Nitze (Hotchkiss '24), Talbott's salute to the liberal meritocrats of the establishment was downright unctuous: "Harold Brown, who has been such an important theoretician and practitioner of national security policy ... McGeorge Bundy ... soon to publish a landmark book on the role of nuclear weapons ... Robert McNamara, himself a key figure in the history of the nuclear age...."

Talbott's books and articles were billed as top-secret inside looks at the movers and shakers, but their real purpose was more to explain than to expose. His three major books on arms control and the cold war, *Endgame*, *Deadly Gambits* and *At the Highest Levels*, were all done with the cooperation of senior officials who agreed to confide in Talbott as long as he agreed not to write anything contemporaneously for *Time*, or to reveal their identities. Talbott's access lent his otherwise anodyne writing a "you are there" feel.

To some, it also lent it an air of professional compromise. In *The New York Times Book Review* in 1984, Theodore Draper took on the "novelized history" of *Deadly Gambits*. Talbott had provided word-for-word quotations, attributed to no source, for the famous 1983 "Walk in the Woods" arms negotiations between Nitze and his Soviet counterpart, Yuli Kvitsinsky. First, Draper pointed out, there were only two men present at the Walks in the Woods, so hiding the source of the words was a charade. Obviously it was Nitze, as Nitze himself later admitted. Second, how could other researchers check Talbott's accuracy if no source was cited?

Draper's polemic was a bit overwrought, and Talbott was right to respond that sometimes reporters have no choice but to protect their sources. (This article is no exception.) Still, Draper raised a legitimate issue. Talbott's coziness with his sources was troubling not because there was a conflict of interest, but because there was an identity of interest. Most of the people Talbott was writing about, or using as sources, were his colleagues in the study groups and panel discussions of such bodies as the Aspen Strategy Group and the Council on Foreign Relations. No fewer than seventeen people mentioned in his books are now fellow senior officials of the Clinton administration. (It was almost eighteen. But Talbott's source and Aspen colleague, Bobby Ray Inman, whom he enthusiastically recommended to Clinton for secretary of defense, confounded Talbott's confidence by staging a public psychological meltdown.)

The cold war, Talbott's intellectual obsession from adolescence to adulthood, posed a series of contradictions for him: between the inner grandeur of the Russian people and the manifest barbarity of Soviet communism (he never denied this); between the danger of nuclear war and the promise of superpower cooperation; between the demands of democracy and the demands of diplomacy. Talbott's romantic view of Russia and elite view of politics shaped the template he developed for sorting out these tensions.

His was a careful balancing act, derived largely from Kennan's work. The Soviets were dangerous. But they were dangerous mostly because Russians feel threatened by, and inferior to, the West. That insecurity might press less urgently upon them if they were shown respect and reassured about the West's intentions. This could be achieved through contact—at the highest levels—between statesmen on both sides. Engagement was valuable for its own sake. In this policy prescription, détente provided mutual reassurance and arms control provided stability. "He was a 'two apes on a treadmill' kind of guy," says one specialist in Russian affairs. "'If we could only have smart people from the Aspen Institute in charge this would all be over.'"

These views once again placed Talbott in the position he found most comfortable: that of treating complicated moral and historical matters in the technocratic language of national interest. Talbott argued that the balance of terror paradoxically was the most realistic, and therefore best, hope of preventing nuclear war. This was a perfectly defensible position, and in the days of the peace movement of the early '80s, a courageous one, because deterrence was under moral attack both from advocates of a nuclear freeze on the left, and from advocates of Star Wars on the right. The purpose of arms control was to refine deterrence. Thus Talbott hailed the Carter administration for its 1979 SALT II agreement with the Soviets, and urged the Reagan administration to swap Star Wars for Soviet reductions in heavy missiles.

The end of the cold war wrecked Talbott's worldview, as it did everyone else's. His first reaction was to declare vindication. In 1990, in a paean to Mikhail Gorbachev as *Time*'s "Man of the Decade," Talbott announced the triumph of Kennanism: "A new consensus is emerging that the Soviet threat is not what it used to be. The real point, however, is that it never was. The doves in the great debate of the past forty years were right all along." The Soviet system had collapsed of its own weight, he maintained, proving it had always been a paper tiger. The West's rearmament and resurgence had had nothing to do with it. "That piece offered Strobe the unique opportunity to commit to paper his conclusions about a subject he'd devoted most of his attention to over twenty years," recalls Henry Muller, the magazine's managing editor at the time. "I pushed Strobe to write his definitive view of the cold war." Reading this essay now, you do feel as if Talbott had been liberated to express the Russophilia that had been welling up inside him for years.

But his "definitive view" is stunningly lopsided. First, it does not follow, logically or empirically, that the hollowness of the Soviet economy and the corruption of Soviet civil institutions rendered the Soviet war machine impotent. Even internally weak regimes can be aggres-

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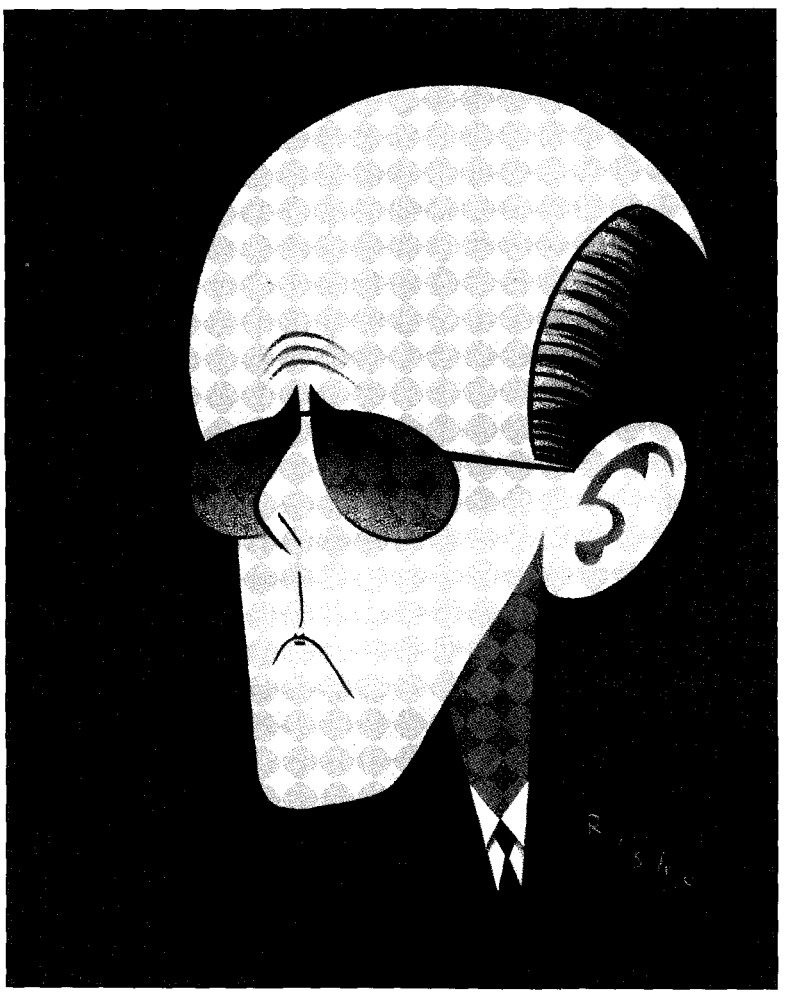
sive abroad. In fact, it is often at moments of greatest internal weakness that dictatorships lash out, seeking to divert public anger or to find abroad the legitimacy that they cannot find at home. The crisis in the Soviet Union became manifest on the domestic front, but it had a clear international component as well: "imperial overstretch." The wars in Angola, Central America and especially Afghanistan not only drained the material resources of the Soviet empire, but also its political legitimacy. Talbott brushed this aside. Star Wars, too, spurred the Soviets to rethink their foreign policy by confronting them with a potential arms race they could not possibly win.

The Soviets were also impressed with the deployment of U.S. nuclear missiles in Europe in 1983. The villain of *Deadly Gambits* was an assistant secretary of defense, Richard Perle, whose insistence on the "zero option" for intermediate-range missiles in Europe Talbott blames for much of the internal administration bickering that undid the talks. The zero option meant the United States would not deploy its cruise missiles and Pershing rockets if the Soviets would agree to take out the SS-20s they already had deployed within range of Europe. Talbott favored a Walk in the Woods-like deal in which the United States would deploy fewer missiles, and the Soviets would keep some of their heavy SS-20s. To Talbott, the zero option was a grandstanding ploy never intended to be acceptable to the Soviets. The Reagan administration's hawks preferred to think of it as political cover for European allies reluctant to deploy U.S. missiles without appearing to try arms control first. The hawks preferred no agreement to an agreement that could help the Soviets by driving a wedge in the alliance and leaving the SS-20s in place, unmatched by similar American weapons.



STROBE TALBOTT BY ROBERT RISKO FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The American missile deployment prompted a Soviet walkout from the talks. Talbott, like many others, wrung his hands about dire consequences for the peace of the world. Talbott thought our interest lay—what else?—in keeping up a dialogue with the Russians, even if no agreement was in range. But the Reagan administration made the judgment that, at that moment, there were greater interests at stake to the West than a continuation of talks: among other things, the political cohesion of the alliance.

That view was vindicated. In 1987 the "Man of the Decade" accepted the zero option. In *Time*, Talbott tried to depict this capitulation as a Soviet victory, claiming they had achieved their goal of getting the U.S. missiles out of Europe. This is absurd. Not only had the USSR failed to keep the U.S. missiles out in 1983, when it mattered most during the cold war, but the Russians had also ended up having to remove all medium-range missiles in Asia as well as in Europe. It was all part of the general Soviet military ebb tide that began as a tactical, negotiated retreat and ended in utter strategic collapse.

For Talbott, Reagan was dangerous not just because he threatened arms control, but also because he hurt the Russians' feelings. The thrust of Talbott's 1984 book, *Reagan and the Russians*, and many of his other writings, was that there were some ugly truths about the Soviet Union better left unspoken. The United States "overplayed its hand" in labeling the Soviet shootdown of Korean Airlines Flight 007 as a mass murder. Reagan's 1982 speech to the British Parliament, in which he spoke of "a great revolutionary crisis" in the Soviet bloc, and of a system bound for "the ash heap of history," was, to Talbott, "bear-baiting." (It now reads like clairvoyance.) Talbott also derided Reagan's "evil empire" remark.

Talbott opposed "linkage," the idea that American positions on arms control and the like should be "linked" to Soviet military intervention in Africa or the fate of dissidents. He echoed the realpolitikal, Kissingerian view that efforts to alter the internal order of the Soviet Union were counterproductive—threatening to the high-level dialogue over "bilateral issues." Talbott repeatedly singles out the 1974 Jackson-Vanik Amend-

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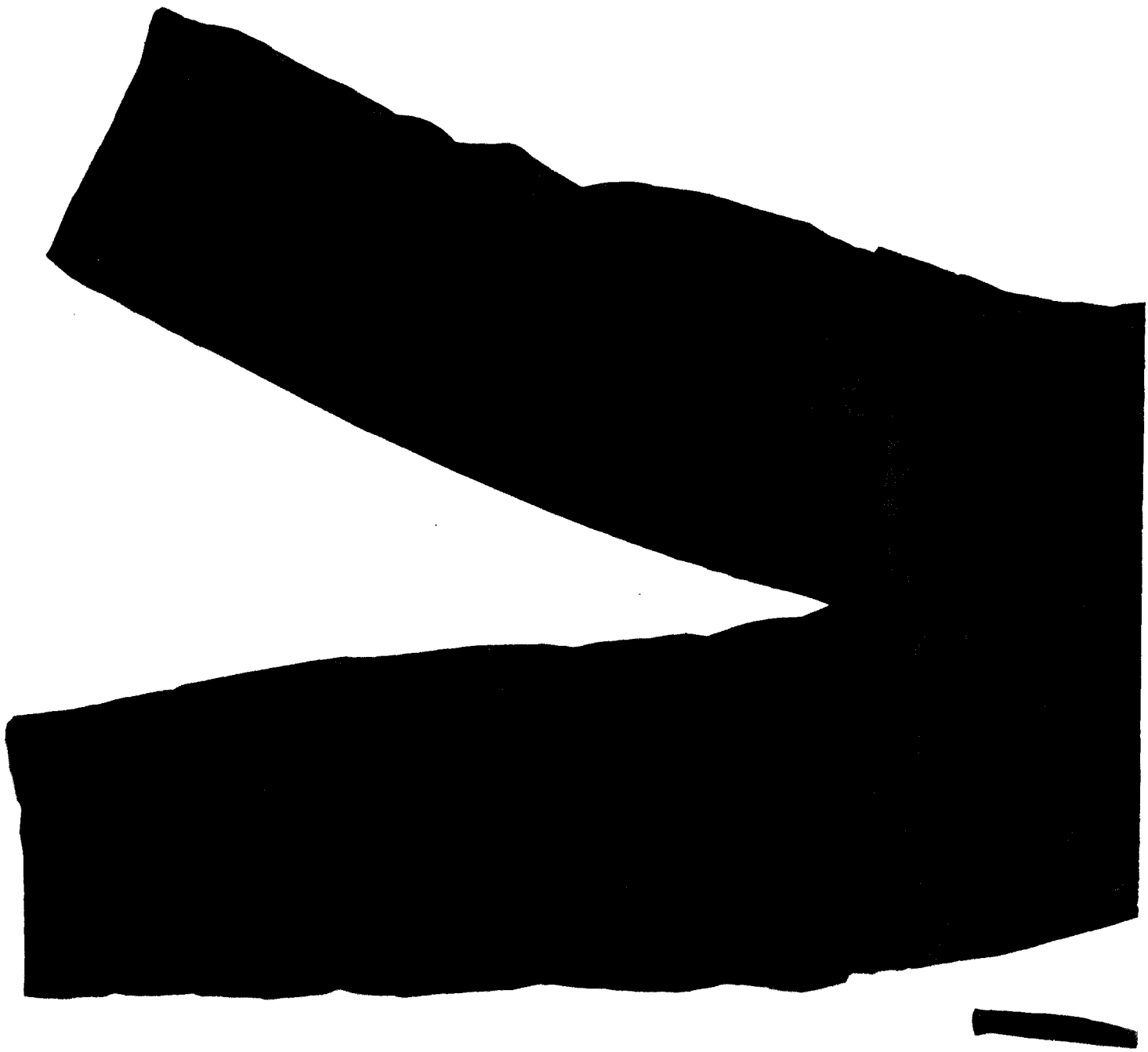

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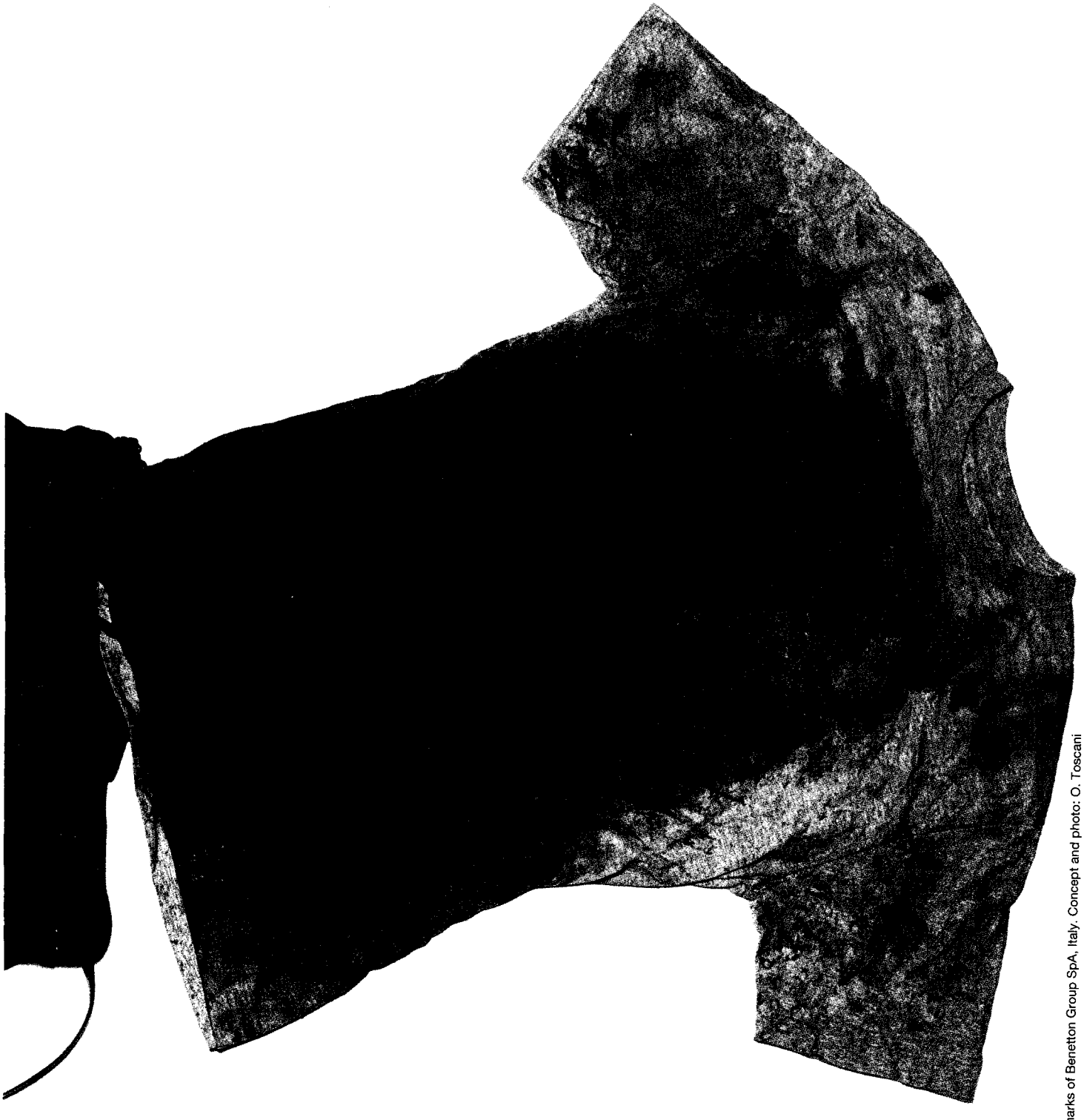

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ment—another intrusion into foreign policy-making by Congress and its obstreperous constituents—as proof that using trade to pressure the Soviets (or anyone else) on human rights is bound to fail. This is at best half right. The amendment denied the Soviet Union Most Favored Nation trading status unless it permitted freedom of travel to Soviet Jews. Shortly after it was passed, the Brezhnev regime did sharply reduce emigration by Jews. But later the Soviet Union restored emigration to higher levels in an effort to curry favor with the United States.

Meanwhile, the West had achieved something of political importance: to once again call attention to the true nature of the Soviet system, and to stand by its victims. Not every futile gesture is an empty gesture. Talbott can't be faulted for failing to predict the fall of the Soviet Union. Only a handful got it right: in the East, Sakharov, Havel and their associates; in the West, Reagan, Thatcher and their associates. Talbott's error was, in a sense, even worse. He knew that Reagan's bold and rudely moralistic rhetoric, and the sanctions linked to human rights, attacked the Soviet Union at its weakest point: its political illegitimacy. And for precisely that reason, he opposed them.

Talbott assigns no credit for the end of the Soviet Union to the long struggle waged by the dissidents and the refuseniks, or the Afghan rebels and the Polish workers. In fact, no one who stood up and took risks to defy the Soviets gets credit. Talbott instead wrote a glowing introduction to Georgi Arbatov's book *The System*, published in 1992, in which the erstwhile apparatchik claims that it was he who was the dissident, that it was the ever so discreet dissent of soft-liners like himself that set the stage for Gorbachev and his reforms. Talbott endorses Arbatov's claim. But then Arbatov, like Tyutchev, was a Talbottesque figure: a fixture at conferences and a man of his establishment.

The collapse of the Soviet empire was a boon for high-level conversation. So many more high levels in so many more low places! As early as March 1990, Talbott was calling for the United States unilaterally to extend full diplomatic relations to Angola, Afghanistan, Cuba and Vietnam. Now that the cold war had ended, there was no point to what Talbott strangely referred to as American "vendettas" against the likes of Muammar Qaddafi and Fidel Castro. "The task for the West is to coax nations with die-hard leftist tyrannies into as much engagement as possible with the outside world," he wrote. "That will accelerate the inevitable transformation of their societies and perhaps even reduce the danger of bloodshed."

Talbott systematically minimizes the fact that constructive engagement contains a moral hazard, which is appeasement. There are bad guys, however cruelly misunderstood, who respond only to one thing: force. The Reagan and Bush administrations learned that the hard way from their dealings with Saddam Hussein; North Korea, a die-hard leftist tyranny newly "engaged" by U.S. diplomats on its nuclear bomb-building program, may yet teach the Clinton administration the same lesson.

Talbott has written little about South Africa, but it is one case where sanctions—imposed by Congress over Reagan administration objections—did as much or more than constructive engagement (the Talbottian Reagan policy toward Pretoria) to help topple a brutal dictatorship. Indeed, it was also a case in which wrangling between Congress and the president was, contrary to Talbott's expressions of disdain, a paradoxically useful factor. Between an engagement-minded president and a sanctions-minded Congress, America developed a good cop/bad cop routine that resulted in an appropriate blend of carrots and sticks. The unruliness of the American foreign policy-making process can, in fact, be a strength: adversaries such as the Soviets and other dictators tend to prefer a predictable environment in which to develop their long-term plans.

The Gulf crisis in 1990 forced Talbott, for the first time since Vietnam, to grapple with the imminent prospect of a major use of U.S. force abroad. His existing outlook provided an uncertain template for the task. On the one hand, he had always seen the oil of the Persian Gulf as a vital U.S. interest, vulnerable to a "Soviet thrust" toward the petroleum and the warm waters. On the other hand, well, there was *Vietnam*. Also, the prospect of going to war had split the establishment. People like Nitze were against it. People like George Shultz were for it. And so Talbott reacted in his way—carefully. His prewar position is no clearer than Bill Clinton's. A person who went with him to Saudi Arabia before the war recalls that Talbott was "hawkish," but an editor at *Time* says, "I can guess he was among those who hoped a resolution could be arrived at short of war." During the Desert Shield phase of the operation, he never wrote a *Time* column urging Bush to use force. The closest Talbott came was to muse that it was right to put an offensive U.S. capability in Saudi Arabia, because it might pressure Saddam to leave without a fight.

Talbott fretted about the ability of the United States and its allies to handle Iraq's military. In part, this was a matter of Saddam's supposed advantages as "a master of twentieth-century totalitarianism," which meant he could be more ruthless in battle than the democracies that opposed him. "Winning [the war] will not be easy," Talbott wrote. The Iraqis were "every bit as tough a military and strategic challenge to the U.S." as the Vietnamese. Talbott was also skittish about the danger of "demonizing" Saddam. As always, he was concerned about the enemy's self-esteem: it was important to defeat Iraq, but "equally important that this crisis not end with the Arab world feeling it has suffered a humiliation at the hands of the West." This fashionable but unfounded expression of anxiety did not include an explanation of how Talbott's finely calibrated proposed outcome could emerge from the ugly crucible of war.

By the end of Desert Storm, however, Talbott had become an enthusiastic hawk, along with everyone else. Correctly, he took Bush to task for failing to support the

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Shiite and Kurdish rebels who rose to topple Saddam in the wake of Desert Storm. His earlier reticence about legislating morality and interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign countries suddenly vanished. "Now that the cold war is over," he wrote, "intervention need no longer be quite so suspect as a cynical gambit on the East-West chessboard. The concept of benevolent interference is already coming back into fashion." Still, Talbott shrank from casting this in terms of America's taking a stand. Rather, the world community could act as one in the name of principle. And the United States, he argued, should be prepared to subordinate its sovereignty to multilateral institutions. Our forces could "join a posse led by someone else," even when our vital interests are not directly threatened.

On Bosnia, he rightly, and early, advocated force against the Serbs, although his motivation seemed curiously driven by domestic concerns. In a column called "Why Bosnia is not Vietnam," written in August 1992, Talbott called for "an all-out [NATO] peacemaking effort" as a way for the United States to "truly cure itself of the Vietnam syndrome." In December 1992 he supported a U.N. trusteeship over Somalia—"humanity's burden." Talbott pooh-poohed the military risk facing the United States and its U.N.-authorized allies as "Toyota Land Cruisers mounted with recoilless rifles manned by boys."

Just beyond the horizon, Talbott discerned a United States of the World growing out of today's multilateral expeditions and organizations. In a July 1992 column, "Birth of the Global Nation," Talbott announced his (hedged) bet that in a century or so, "nationhood as we know it will be obsolete; all states will recognize a single global authority." The stage was set for "a world federalism ... a union of separate states that allocate certain powers to central government while retaining many others for themselves."

Talbott's aims were noble, his assertions sweeping. His call for U.N. trusteeship was a refreshing departure from squeamishness about "neo-colonialism." His mistake, however, was to suppose that removing the element of superpower conflict from regional conflicts rendered any military action there somehow apolitical. The trend to global integration is real; but there is also a cross-cutting trend toward fragmentation along ethnic lines. It is by no means clear which tendency will win out in the end. Meanwhile, all politics is still maddeningly local. Thus, in Somalia, the United States led in a U.N. posse to feed the hungry—what could be more apolitical? American forces wound up spearheading a U.N. effort to sort out a byzantine clan struggle that was deadly but in which we had no real stake. The net result was an American humiliation: the defeat of elite Delta Force and Ranger troops by those boys in Land Cruisers—among the wounded were Talbott's dreams of trusteeship, not to mention world government.

Then there is the Middle East. At Talbott's recent confirmation hearings, he was quizzed by senators about a 1981 article in *Time* titled "What To Do About Israel," which he penned just after Israel's bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak. In the article, Talbott called the idea of Israel's strategic value to the United States a "delusion" and suggested cuts in military aid to Israel if it ever took "international law into its own hands" as "violently and as embarrassingly to the United States" as it had done over Iraq. He suggested that American Jews "wield influence far beyond their numbers."

Of course, the Osirak action was in the interest of America—and even of Saddam's rival Arab states. Just think how the Iran-Iraq War, or the Gulf crisis, would have unfolded if that bomb factory had been left intact. Confronted with his own words at the hearings, Talbott pursed his lips, shifted in his chair and repudiated his paper trail. "On that I simply have changed my opinion," he said. "I do believe Israel is indeed a strategic asset of the United States." Pressed by Senator Paul Sarbanes of Maryland on using aid to change the policy of democracies with which the United States "has a special relationship," Talbott said his "core belief" was exactly the same as Sarbanes's; he had just "deviated" from it in the "heat" of his "different line of work" as a journalist.

The truth is that the alleged problems Israel causes for U.S. interests in the Middle East were a staple Talbott theme. In 1990 he compared the rape of Kuwait to the occupation of the West Bank. While conceding that Israel had come by the West Bank in a defensive war with Jordan, he argued that its settlement of the territory was like Saddam's claim to a nineteenth province. In 1991 he wrote that the Soviet Jews flowing into Israel might obstruct peace and harm U.S.-Israel relations because they were "easy recruits" for the hard-line Likud party in the upcoming election, and because they would be settled on the West Bank.

In the short run Talbott's views on Israel probably won't matter very much, because he will concentrate on Russia. The Labor party is back in control in Israel, having won the 1992 election, *pace* Talbott, with the lion's share of newly settled Soviet Jews' votes. Israel is pursuing a land-for-peace deal with the Palestinians—a fact that vindicates Talbott's view that such a deal was in Israel's long-term interest, but debunks his claim that the settlements were the main obstacle to a breakthrough. And, to be sure, Talbott had reason to feel frustrated with the dilatory government of Yitzhak Shamir.

Israel nevertheless represents a glaring exception to Talbott's overall penchant for stroking countries that give the United States a hard time. He doesn't seem to worry about wounding Israeli leaders' self-esteem or interfering in their internal affairs. In fact, in 1981 he advocated U.S. pressure on Israel as a means of helping topple then Prime Minister Menachem Begin at the polls: after all, he noted acidly, "Israel has been interfering skillfully in U.S. politics for decades, and will be doing so with a vengeance ... over the Saudi AWACS sale."

Perhaps Talbott harbors these feelings because Israeli

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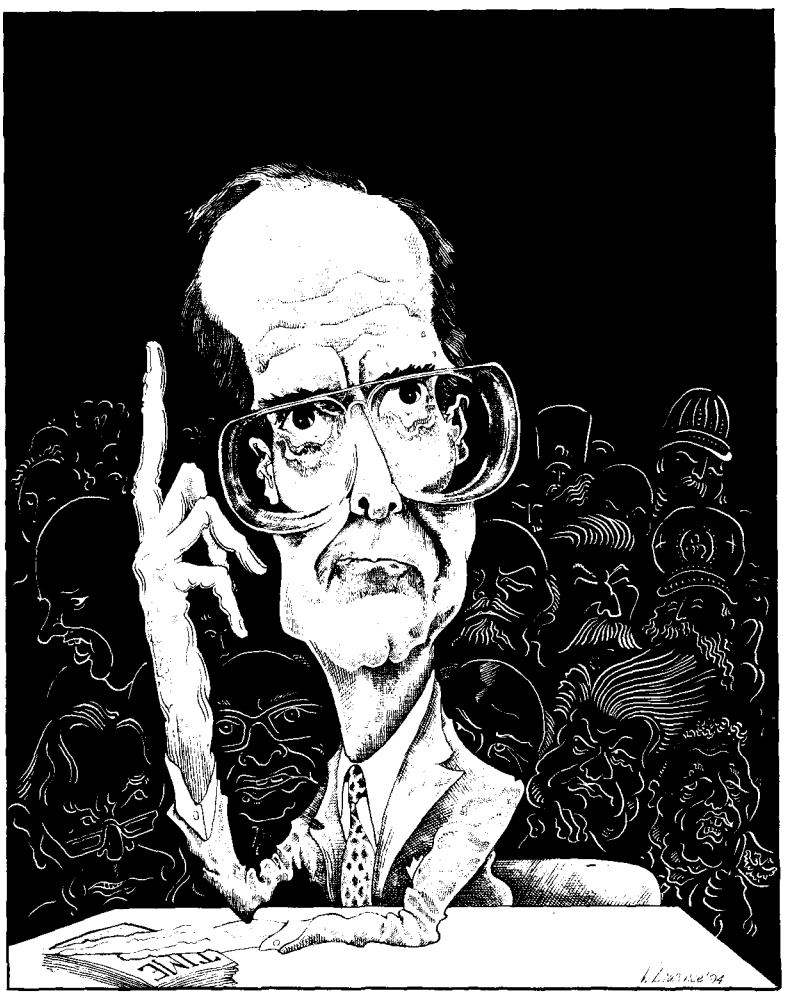
behavior simply flies in the face of all of his nostrums. The Israelis don't have much use for summit conferences. They protect their principles and their security, as at Osirak, whether that costs them friends or not. Indeed, they wear the enmity of certain countries as a badge of honor. Israel, with its fractious Parliament and citizen army, makes decisions hyperdemocratically. And its support in the United States depends less on the considered assent of disinterested regional specialists than it does on winning over Congress with the help of a citizens' lobby.

Strobe Talbott is undeniably a smart man, but is he really a wise one? We are about to find out. For the first time in his distinguished but safe career, he finds himself in a post where his judgments will have life-and-death consequences. It will be impossible not to make real enemies. To this unaccustomed role, he brings the same conceptual equipment that produced such mixed results for him during and after the cold war. His newfound impulse to moral interventionism, and his earnest optimism about increasing world cooperation, could lead the administration into more blind alleys in the regional conflicts of the non-Western world. His stubbornly romantic view of Russia—together with a desire to keep dealing with a Kremlin elite that is no longer necessarily in control—could prove an obstacle to fresh and realistic thinking .



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

In terms of taking a stand, the high point of Talbott's government service so far was his unequivocal defense of President Boris Yeltsin against the reactionaries of the now disbanded Russian parliament. The low point was his performance in the wake of the strong showing by neo-fascist Vladimir Zhirinovsky in the December 12, 1993, elections for a new parliament. He lost his cool and compounded the damage, saying that the vote meant that Russia's economy needed "less shock and *more therapy*." The comment betrayed colossal ignorance about the true nature of the economic reform, ignored the failure of the United States to provide substantial aid sooner (see "Betrayal" by Jeffrey Sachs, TNR, January 24) and handed the reactionaries in Russia a propaganda coup. The last reformer in Yeltsin's Cabinet, Finance Minister Boris Fyodorov, resigned, blaming Talbott for "stabbing reform in the back." He had a point. Talbott has subsequently undermined U.S. credibility even further by partially withdrawing his comment.

Talbott was right in the recent debate on expanding NATO. His five-page, single-spaced memo arguing against including the Eastern European countries in the alliance persuaded Secretary of State Christopher to back the more tentative "Partnership for Peace." Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are not ready for full participation in NATO (and America is not ready to commit itself to their defense); their more pressing need is access to Western markets. But Talbott won this argument by invoking the wrong reason: the encirclement cliché. We can't risk arousing the Russians' fears, which would inflame the Russian military, which would set back the cause of reform. Russia is important, the fate of Russia's leader is important to the fate of Russia and the fate of Russia is important to America. Russia's interests and residual military strength must be taken into account. But none of that means that the leader of Russia must be given a say in the policy of the West—on NATO, Bosnia (think of Bill Clinton waiting two days to have a dialogue about Bosnia with Yeltsin) or anywhere else.

Talbott, though, seems most comfortable treating the Kremlin as if it were still the seat of a superpower. It's all a part of engagement. And it serves another purpose. As long as Moscow, twinned with Washington, is vital to the world, there will always be a conversation partner for Strobe Talbott—at the highest level. The American foreign policy elite can perpetuate a role for itself into the next century. The long, twilight dialogue can go on; and the master of the game can keep on playing. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Messing Around

Ingmar Bergman's new book, *Images*, is a series of comments on his films and the making of them. At one point he talks about *After the Rehearsal* (1983) and says that it "was written expressly for the joy of materializing it together with Sven Nykvist, Erland Josephson and Lena Olin. I have always followed Lena with tenderness and professional interest." He hadn't yet seen her latest, **Romeo Is Bleeding** (Gramercy).

Reviewing Olin's last film, *Mr. Jones*, I suggested that this Swedish actress, so fine in previous appearances, might be hurting herself by trying to squeeze into a Hollywood mold. She's still squeezing—even harder. Here she plays a Dragon Lady of crime, a European-born fiend, international in her slinkings and slayings and acquisitive guile. So extreme are her horizontal maneuverings vis-à-vis gullible policemen that she seems a cartoon of the queen in Jerome Robbins's ballet *The Cage*.

If the director, Peter Medak, and the screenwriter, Hilary Henkin, had intended a parody of film noir, then Olin might have nestled in cozily amidst all these addle-pated grotesqueries. But Medak and Henkin are in more than one way witless, and Olin is forced to play this monster straight—if that's the word. This includes such moments as the scene in which, her hands cuffed behind her in the back seat of a police car, she throws her legs around the neck of the cop who's driving and tries to strangle him. (Close students will note that sex and death are being linked.)

In this attenuated drivel, Gary Oldman, the English actor who is now adept at American accents, plays a New York detective who sells out to a crime don and eventually is caught between law and crime. He is paid to set up a hit on Olin for the don, but her sexy wiles distract him. Both the law and the don are then after him. However, it's impossible to care because, first, the character as drawn is a moron and, second, the sound track, recounting the story in retrospect, is freighted with ponderous vacuities.

The picture's only real interest is to make us wonder about Olin herself and, through her, about the fate of good actors in general. The question is not whether good foreign-born actors have to remain at home in order to remain progressively creative. Is the film world so clearly divided between film Edens abroad and the Nibelung caverns of Hollywood gold? Abundant examples contradict both sides of that proposition.

No, the grim truth is that all actors, everywhere, successful or less renowned, are in great degree victims. If circumstances in the theater make it possible for theater actors to mitigate that condition, it is almost impossible to do so in the film world. In great degree actors, stellar or not, must either accept the best of what comes along or bravely wait for something better—a very risky choice for more than financial reasons. Most often they take the first option and keep hoping.

Even a giant talent like Max von Sydow doesn't wait: he does *Conan the Barbarian* and *Dune* and such because they are presumably the best of what is available at the time, and then when the chance arises, he does *Pelle the Conqueror* and gives a performance for the ages. Instances of this pattern could be added: but invariably the basic cause is that a splendid opportunity for an actor happened to come along. If an actor's career has peaks, even many of them, they almost always occur after slogging through intervening valleys.

Does this mean that we ought to applaud Olin's embarrassing performance in *Romeo Is Bleeding* just because this script was the best she could get at the time? Certainly not—not if reason is to remain rational. Still, we might remember that an actor's career cannot be strictly compared with that of such a performing artist as a musician. Choices are scantier for actors. Even stars don't have comparable freedom.

James L. Brooks has been a better writer-director than he is sometimes accounted. *Terms of Endearment* was castigated as a bourgeois film by some of the most arrantly bourgeois critics of the day because it dwelled in familiar emotional territory. As for myself, certainly no bohemian, I thoroughly enjoyed its deployment of conventional emotional maneuvers because it was all done with great directorial skill, sharp writing and excellent acting. As an epic of the purpose and problems of family life, it doesn't exactly rank with *Tokyo Story*, but it certainly was good enough to be funny and moving and, best of all, to make us admire Brooks while we were laughing and gulping.

Broadcast News, his microwave sizzling

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Belle Epoque. *Spain, 1931. A young man in a house with four lovely young women and their tolerant father. Everyone enjoys it, including us. (Reviewed 2/21/94)* **Philadelphia.** *Hollywood's first major attempt to deal with AIDS—and much better than that may sound. Tom Hanks is grittily authentic as the man in question. (1/10&17/94)* **The Scent of Green Papaya.** *A 10-year-old Vietnamese girl comes to work in Saigon in 1951. A generally lyrical recapturing of a lost life. (2/28/94)* **Schindler's List.** *A German's mysteriously benevolent act amidst the mysteries of Nazi evil. Steven Spielberg's stark monument honors this true story. (12/13/93 and 1/24/94)* **—SK**

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of the T.V. news world, had more bumps in it, but it was clever. Now, however, comes **I'll Do Anything** (Columbia), which is so deplorable that it provokes the lowest form of critical japery—a joke on the title.

Brooks has done *everything* here. First, as has been bruited nationally, this film was made as a musical; the numbers were then junked, and the result is, more or less, the skeleton of a former musical. Second, it's another satire on Hollywood, which is just exactly what the world has been panting for. Third, it's about the troubles of a divorced father trying to get along with his daughter who comes to stay with him and, in the very week it appeared, it was the second picture with that hoary premise.

Occasionally, the script shows glints of Brooks's sardonic scalpel, but for the most part the picture is dull stuff desperately dolled up. The structure is full of strands left stranded. For instance, early in the picture Ian McKellen appears very briefly as a film director. His part may have been thought of as a cameo, but it looks like a snippet left over after desperate alterations.

Joely Richardson, who is becoming a stunner, has the weirdest part in terms of coherence. She plays a story editor at a studio who has a relationship with an actor, then votes against him for a role because he is not sexy enough. Possibly she votes against him because she doesn't want to stand out against the others at the meeting, but this isn't made sufficiently cowardly or comic; and it's contradicted because she later works to get him leading roles in other films. Her character is simply a collection of actions that need to be done at particular moments.

The picture's biggest burden is Nick Nolte in the leading role, as a once-prominent actor on the skids, now taking care of his visiting daughter. (Neil Simon did something analogous in *I Ought to Be in Pictures.*) Nolte is ghastly. As he slumps around, not much interested in what's happening, he continually shows us that his idea of playing comedy is to make faces—pleasant, wistful, angry, you name it and he has the mugging for it. His performance here could be used in acting schools as an arch example of "indicating."

Double disappointment. Nolte has shown—in *North Dallas Forty, New York Stories, Q&A*, for instance—that, under the right director, he can act. Brooks has shown that he can direct actors. But this isn't a collaboration: it's a train wreck. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

A Theater Marking Time

At any given historical moment a nation's theater is a dependable barometer of its cultural life. Whether that culture is moving forward or backward is related to whether the stage is dominated by playwrights or by directors and actors—which is to say, whether by new plays or by classics. To judge by my most recent visit to England, the British theater currently belongs more to its interpretive artists than to its creative ones. Lacking enough new works of any real quality, England is now primarily devoted to renewing its traditions through fresh looks at the great texts of the past.

This is an entirely honorable alternative to theatrical stasis, but it signifies a culture marking time. Harold Pinter and David Hare are still capable of giving the stage a jolt from time to time, and Caryl Churchill has just opened a (problematical) new work at the National. But the really big events this season are not new plays, but classical masterpieces dominated by star performers and resourceful directors. The productions that I saw were of varying quality, which sometimes made me nostalgic for remembered glories. Still, it was a joy to be again in theaters whose central objective was creating compelling works of art rather than delivering community services or promoting audience development.

The event that truly enthralled me on this visit was Diana Rigg's ferocious performance in Euripides' **Medea** at the Wyndham. This production, under the direction of Jonathan Kent, had originally opened at the Almeida Theatre in Islington, where, in addition to new plays by Pinter and revivals of Rattigan, Kent and his partner, Ian McDiarmid, have been producing such arcane, star-activated classics as Dryden's *All for Love* (also with Rigg), Racine's *Phèdre* (with Janet Suzman) and Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken* (with Claire Bloom).

WILFRED M. McCLAY

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For *Medea,* Kent chose a stark, simple style of presentation, reducing the chorus of Corinthian women to three ladies in black, sitting on chairs and alternately chanting and singing. Together with the Nurse, they reminded me of the keening Irish women who mourned the drowned Bartley in Synge's *Riders to the Sea.* And there was a lot to keen about here, given the shattering events of the play. Peter J. Davison's burnished, steel-panel setting reinforced the cruel sense of moral disintegration by literally bursting apart with a great racket at the bloody climax.

All the performances were strong, though Tim Woodward's ranting Jason did not respond convincingly to the horrible death of his children, a scene as difficult to enact as Macduff's grief over losing "all my pretty chickens and their dam at one fell swoop." But Rigg more than compensated with a Medea that stands with the most riveting performances of our time.

I started applauding Rigg's artistic progress in the early '70s when she first gave up the easy celebrity of *The Avengers* to explore the deeper demands of classical theater. Her Medea confirms my conviction that an actor grows in proportion to the way she embraces the great repertory roles. To be sure, Rigg's feline grace had always seemed to me more appropriate for wit comedy than for classical tragedy. But although her Lady Macbeth with Anthony Hopkins and her Regan in Olivier's T.V. *Lear* had been admirable, I was not prepared for the scorching power of her Medea. The cat was transformed into a panther who roars and lacerates rather than purrs and scratches. Like few English actors of her generation, Rigg now pulls her voice out of her internal organs, producing a sound of almost primitive savagery. The last Medea I saw was Judith Anderson in the 1946 Robinson Jeffers version (I believe John Gielgud was her Jason) where she skulked and scowled as if still playing Mrs. Danvers in *Rebecca.* Rigg restores to the role its terrifying animal nature.

In a red dress, long ponytail and bare feet, Rigg greets us with a piercing cry of pain. All her sacrifices for Jason have been rewarded with treachery, since he is preparing to contract a cynical match with Creon's daughter (the proto-feminist theme of male advancement at the expense of women is heightened in Alistair Elliot's new translation). Describing her indignities and her sense of abandonment, she coils like a snake, growls, hisses and croaks like a fury, calling up images from jungle mythology. Perhaps inspired by how Olivier had trained his voice for *Othello,* Rigg has obviously worked hard to develop deeper vocal registers for this role. Yet her Medea remains consistently womanly, even when she materializes near the end, drenched in the blood of her slaughtered children. (By comparison with the way Medea repays her husband for sexual abuse, Lorena Bobbitt's revenge is almost merciful.) At the conclusion, Rigg disappears, not in a deus ex machina but in a swirl of angry clouds, leaving us in the after-calm of an emotional storm one rarely experiences on the stage these days.

Anthony Sher tries to kick up the same sort of dust in the Royal Shakespeare Company production of **Tamburlaine the Great** at the Barbican. And for five of the ten acts, he manages quite effectively. Although Christopher Marlowe's marvelous two-part epic of imperial conquest is the first English play by a literary genius, it is very rarely produced, perhaps because the staging requires tactics and logistics cultivated less by theater directors than by military strategists. In the first professional revival since the early seventeenth century, Brigadier General Tyrone Guthrie led his troops in a 1951 production starring Donald Wolfit and a huge supporting army (all I remember of that is a lot of swirling figures impaled by arrows). Terry Hands has now directed a big, boisterous, bludgeoning version of the show that allows Anthony Sher full scope to bellow and bluster.

Tamburlaine is Marlowe's first essay on the nature of aspiring minds. He is drawn to heroes who, in Berlioz's words, "make all barriers crack"—in *Tamburlaine* through world conquest, in *Doctor Faustus* through forbidden knowledge, in *The Jew of Malta* through absolute evil. The most modern of the Elizabethans, a government spy and uncloseted homosexual, Marlowe fathered a genealogical line of rebels leading to Sade, Genet, Orton (whom he resembles in the violent manner of his early death) and the Theater of Cruelty.

An Artaudian bloodbath, *Tamburlaine* is a play that exults in butchery and carnage. In his thirst for glory, the hero is loyal only to the captive Zenocrate. He scourges and pillages, batters and strangles, hangs up the slaughtered carcasses of virgins on a wall, even murders his own cowardly son. At the conclusion he is preparing to storm the heavens—"to set black streamers in the firmament to signify the slaughter of the gods"—and is stymied only by his own mortality. Through the character of Pistol, Shakespeare makes fun of Tamburlaine's extravagance and hyperbole, but Marlowe is the only contemporary for whom he expresses any real admiration.

The most American of English actors, Anthony Sher makes Tamburlaine into a cross between Al Pacino and Douglas Fairbanks. Sporting a Cherokee haircut, bare arms and a huge black mustache, he gives the most calisthenic of performances, complete with tumbles and handsprings, climbing a rope backward, shambling loosely around the stage like a boxer. Unlike some of his supporting cast, who often sound more like elocutionists than soldiers, Sher is capable of savoring Marlowe's swelling verse without sounding like a RADA graduate. And he has a really good time battling a variety of enemies, including four Turkish kings on mechanical stilts.

Ultimately, however, all the clanging music and bravura acting, not to mention the constant heavy smoke of the production, begin to wear you down a little. And after Sher's Tamburlaine turns fat and sluggish in the second part, his physical agility can no longer compensate for a lack of inner strength. Following the death of Zenocrate, having burned the Koran to signify his superiority to Mahomet ("on earth there's none but me"), Tamburlaine suddenly falls ill, and, in truth, it's time to die. We're left exhausted by the bombast, though grateful to have seen the play.

At Stratford I witnessed the final performances of two productions, the first being the new RSC **Tempest**, under the direction of Sam Mendes. It was the most disappointing experience of my visit. Alec McCowen, playing Prospero, still appeared to be reciting *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (his one-person show), contributing a sonorous, milk-fed performance that not only put Miranda to sleep but half the audience. If McCowen's milk was homogenized, that of Simon Russell Beale, playing Ariel, was curdled. Sour, sullen and sulky as an ill-tempered Regent Street window-dresser, Beale's Ariel was not only imprisoned against his will, but beneath his class. Set free, he thanked Prospero by spitting in his face. Usually a capable actor, Beale in this role looked like the type that only does scornful parts.

There were two engaging performances in this deadly *Tempest,* those of David Bradley as Trinculo and Mark Lockyer as Stephano. Lockyer played the drunken butler with an Oxbridge accent (squeezed through a set of protruding false teeth) like a fantastical Bertie Wooster, and Bradley turned Trinculo into a red-wigged vaudevillian in a checkered suit and long shoes. Brandishing a ventriloquist's dummy dressed in the same clothes and sharing some of his lines, Bradley managed to contribute the few moments of real delight in an otherwise torpid production.

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Finally, there was Robert Stephens in the lead role of **King Lear**, also at Stratford, in a heartbreaking performance, and I mean this in a number of ways. In his powerful debut in the Osborne-Creighton *Epitaph for George Dillon* in the late '50s, Stephens showed the sardonic power of a great English actor, but for years an alcohol problem severely limited his potential. Having freed himself of this affliction, he brings a ravaged persona to the most difficult role ever written, and the results are poignant and penetrating, though ultimately lacking in sufficient stamina to make the performance unforgettable.

In Stephens's hands, Lear's exhaustion is evident from his first appearance. Limping slightly, large-nosed, gaunt and hollow, though endowed with an ample belly, the actor looks like a homeless wretch dressed up in a bright red coat. With his wispy beard and desperate eyes, he evokes the vague mental wanderings, the mad melancholy, of a derelict Don Quixote. His feelings for Cordelia do not constitute his most tender relationship, not surprisingly considering Abigail McKern's Yorkshire pudding appearance in the part. She's too heavy to lug by himself (most Lears demand lightweight Cordelias) so he allows some soldiers to carry in her body. Enraged at her death, he kicks her over on her stomach.

Lear's warmest feelings are reserved for his Fool. And in Ian Hughes's beautifully modulated performance, these feelings are wholly reciprocated. I have not seen a more affectionate, touching engagement between these two characters since Louis Calhern and Norman Lloyd played the roles in John Houseman's production more than forty years ago. The seat of Lear's affliction, in Stephens's bittersweet rendering, is the heart. He suffers from angina pains and his "hysterico passio" or "climbing passion" is something close to cardiac arrest. The Fool, leading Lear away, holds his master's heart as if to keep it from breaking. He hugs and fondles him, sharing moments of remorse and regret. For all his goading and nagging, Hughes's Fool expresses an almost physical love for Lear. He can't let him out of his sight, and when he disappears a crucial link is broken. I have never seen the relationship played so much like a marriage.

Adrian Noble directs this production with the same meticulous attention to detail and fresh approach to language that he showed in last year's *Hamlet*. Anthony Ward's design is dominated by a huge hanging sphere that opens after the blinding of Gloucester, like a cracked moon, to spill a mountain of sand on the stage. If this is a literalized realization of Lear's desire to "Crack Nature's molds, all germains spill at once, / That makes ungrateful man," it has more impact than the hoarse thunderings of Stephens, who is dampened by the drenching rain, both physically and emotionally. Stephens has beautifully rendered the ruefulness of the role, but ultimately fails to convey its majesty and size.

A number of the supporting performances are disappointing, but David Bradley's tortured Gloucester (especially seen in repertory with his jaunty Trinculo) identifies him as one of the strongest and most versatile members of this company. Bradley will undoubtedly be next in line to play this part. It is actors like he, along with Stephens and Rigg, who keep the English stage alive.•

The Paris Strangler

By Tony Judt

The Future Lasts Forever: A Memoir by Louis Althusser

(The New Press, 365 pp., $25)

I was brought up a Marxist. Nowadays that is not much of a boast, but it had its advantages. Parents and grandparents were imbued with all of the assumptions and some of the faith that shaped the European Socialist movement in its heyday. Coming from that branch of East European Jewry that had embraced Social Democracy and the Bund (the Jewish Labor organization of early twentieth-century Russia and Poland), my own family was viscerally anti-Communist. In its eyes, Bolshevism was not only a dictatorship, it was also—and this, too, was a serious charge—a travesty of Marxism. By the time I went to university, I had been thoroughly inoculated with all the classical nineteenth-century texts; and as a result I was immune to the wide-eyed enthusiasm with which Marxist revelations were greeted by those of my freshmen peers who were discovering them for the first time.

Thus, when I arrived in Paris as a graduate student in the late '60s, I was skeptically curious to see and to hear Louis Althusser. In charge of the teaching of philosophy at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, the French elite academy for future teachers and leaders, Althusser was touted by everyone I met as a man of extraordinary gifts, who was transforming our understanding of Marx and reshaping revolutionary theory. His name, his ideas, his books were everywhere. Sitting in on his crowded and sycophantic seminar, I was utterly bemused. For Althusser's account of Marxism, to the extent that I could make any sense of it, bore no relation to anything I had ever heard. It chopped Marx into little bits, selected those texts or parts of texts that suited the master's interpretation and then proceeded to construct the most astonishingly abstruse, self-regarding and ahistorical version of Marxist philosophy imaginable. The exercise bore no discernible relationship to Marxism, to philosophy or to pedagogy. After a couple of painful attempts to adapt myself to the experience and to derive some benefit from it, I abandoned the seminar and never went back.

Returning to the subject many years later, and constrained for professional reasons to read Althusser's mercifully few published works, I understood a little better what had been going on, intellectually and sociologically. Althusser was engaged in what he and his acolytes called a "symptomatic reading" of Marx, which is to say that they took from him what they needed and ignored the rest. Where they wished Marx to have said or meant something that they could not find in his writings, they interpreted the "silences," thereby constructing an entity of their own imagination. This thing they called a science, one that Marx was said to have invented and that could be applied, gridlike, to all social phenomena.

Why invent a Marxist "science" when so much was already at hand, the Marxist "theory of history," "historical materialism," "dialectical materialism" and the rest? The answer is that Althusser, like so many others in the '60s, was trying to save Marxism from the two major threats to its credibility: the grim record of Stalinism and the failure of Marx's revolutionary forecasts. Althusser's special contribution was to remove Marxism

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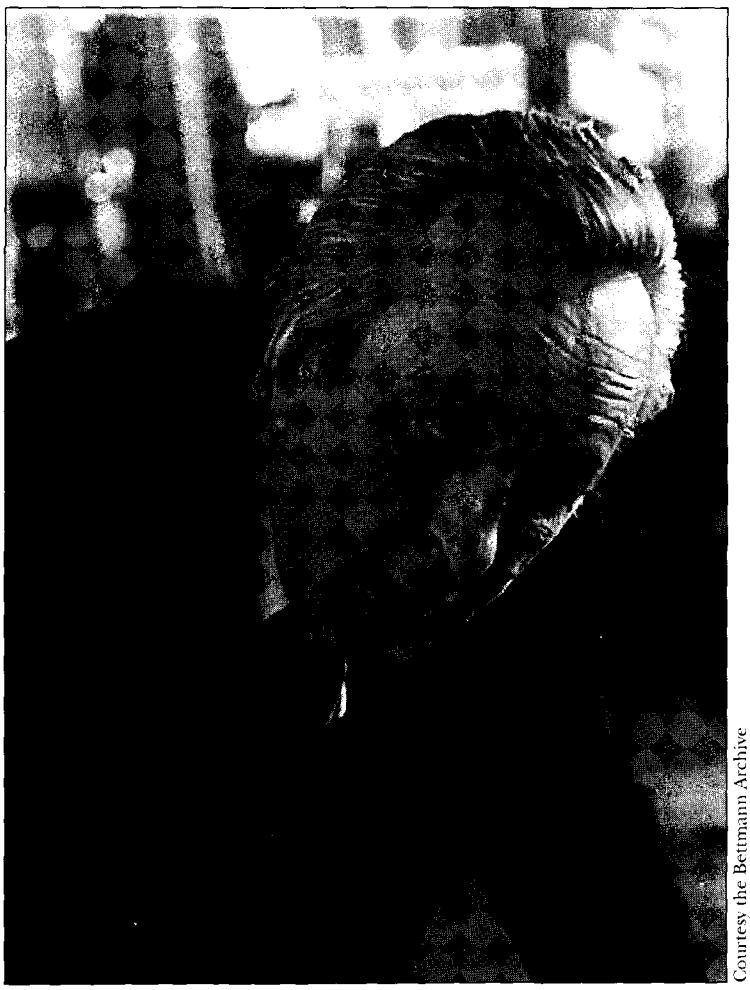
altogether from the realm of history, politics and experience, and thereby to render it invulnerable to any criticism of the empirical sort.

In Althusser-speak, Marxism was a theory of structural practices: economic, ideological, political, theoretical. It had nothing to do with human volition or agency, and thus it was unaffected by human frailty or inadequacy. These "practices" determined history. Their respective importance, and their relationship to one another, varied with circumstances; the "dominant structure" was sometimes "economic practice" and sometimes "political practice," and so on. Of particular significance was the notion of "theoretical practice." This oxymoronic phrase, which came to be chanted, mantralike, all over Europe in those years, had the special charm of placing intellectuals and intellectual activity on the same plane as the economic organizations and the political strategies that had preoccupied earlier generations of Marxists.

This subjectless theory of everything had a further virtue. By emphasizing the importance of theory, it diverted attention from the embarrassing defects of recent practice. In such an account, Stalin's crime was not that he had murdered millions of human beings, it was that he had perverted the self-understanding of Marxism. Stalinism, in short, was just another mistake in theory, albeit an especially egregious one, whose major sin consisted of its refusal to acknowledge its own errors. This was important to Althusser, who was a member of the French Communist Party and who sought to admit the embarrassing history of that organization without undermining whatever remained of its claim to revolutionary omniscience. The Party's leadership itself had responded to this conundrum by belatedly treating Stalin as an unfortunate but parenthetical episode in the otherwise unblemished record of communism. His crimes were a mere deviation born of the cult of personality. But Althusser went one better by showing that "Stalin" and his works constituted only a collective analytical error. This performed the double service of keeping personalities out of the matter and reiterating the centrality of concepts.

It is hard, now, to recapture the mood of the '60s in which this absurd dialectical joust seemed appealing. But Althusser unquestionably filled a crucial niche. He gave young Maoists an impressively high-flown language in which to be "anti-humanist" Communists, dismissive of the "Italian road" to socialism. At the time this was a matter of some importance: the early works of Marx, notably the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, had only recently entered the canon, having for many years languished unknown and untranslated. Placed alongside his other youthful writings, they suggested a rather different Marx from the conventional image passed down from Engels via the popularizers of the early European Socialist movements; a man more interested in Romantic-era philosophy than in classical economics, an idealist whose agenda was not simply social revolution but the moral transformation of mankind. The interest in this "humanist" Marx had been aroused both by the recent French rediscovery of Hegel and by a new generation of radical intellectuals seeking to locate Marx in something other than the lineage imposed upon the European left by the doctrinaire positivism of Leninism.



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LOUIS ALTHUSSER

Taking his cue from the growing fashion for "structuralism" (initially confined to linguistics and anthropology, but by the early '60s seeping into sociology and philosophy), Althusser worked hard to excommunicate this humanist and understandably more appealing Marx as "unscientific." In his view, to emphasize the moral condition and responsibilities of individual men was to detract from an appreciation of the larger, impersonal forces at work in history, and thus to delude the workers, or anyone else, into believing they could act on their own behalf, instead of accepting the authority of those who spoke and thought for them. In his words, "only theoretical anti-humanism justifies general practical humanism."

To flesh out his structuralist account, Althusser invented something that he and his followers called "Ideological State Apparatuses." In his heyday these were confined to the public and political world. In his memoirs, however, his attention was diverted to more personal matters. Althusser informs us that "it is an irrefutable fact that the Family is the most powerful State Ideological Apparatus" (obligatory capitals), and in reflecting upon his experience in the mental hospital he wonders "what can now be done to free the mentally ill from the Hell created for them by the combined operations of all the Ideological State Apparatuses." In Althusserian dogma the presence of these repressive and all-embracing ogres was held particularly responsible for the inconvenient stability and durability of liberal democracy. Of special note was the announcement that the university was, of all of these, the dominant one for our era. "Theoretical practice" in the academic arena was thus the site of ideological battle; and philosophy was absolutely vital as the "class struggle in theory." Scholars in their seminars were on the front line, and need feel guilty no more.

Althusser borrowed a term from the philosopher Gaston Bachelard and

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announced that an "epistemological break" in Marx's writings had occurred somewhere in the mid-1840s. Everything he wrote before the break was neo-Hegelian humanist flannel and could be ignored. Henceforth left-wing students and lecturers were free to jettison those bits of (the early) Marx that seemed to speak of alienation, reconciliation, human agency and moral judgment. This was hard for many people in the '60s to swallow. In Italy and in the English-speaking world, most young left-wingers were more attracted to the idea of a gentler, kinder Marx. In France, however, where the sordid political compromises of the Socialists and Communists during the battle over decolonization had left a sour taste among some of their younger supporters, this static, structuralist Marx sounded analytically pure and politically uncompromising.

By the end of the '70s, however, Althusser's star was on the wane. He had been absent during the events of May 1968, and had showed little interest in the political developments of that year. His only direct comment on the "failed revolution" of 1968 was characteristic and revealing: "When revolt ends in defeat without the workers being massacred, it is not necessarily a good thing for the working class which has no martyrs to mourn or commemorate." Even his erstwhile followers admitted that he had nothing new to offer, and his rigid stance in defense of Marxism, communism and "the revolution" made him appear irrelevant in a decade that saw the publication in France of *The Gulag Archipelago*, the tragedy in Cambodia, the eclipse of Mao and the steady loss of radical faith among a generation of French intellectuals. Had matters been left there, Althusser could have looked forward to a peaceful and obscure old age, a curious relic of a bizarre but forgotten era.

But then, on November 16, 1980, he murdered his wife Hélène in their apartment at the Ecole Normale. Or, as the jacket copy of The New Press's translation of his memoir coyly puts it, "while massaging his wife's neck [he] discovered he had strangled her." (To be fair, this is how Althusser himself explained the event; but it is curious to find the claim reproduced unattributed on the book.) Althusser was examined by doctors, found to be mentally unfit to stand trial and locked away in a psychiatric hospital. Three years later he was released and spent his last years in a dreary flat in north Paris, emerging occasionally to startle passers-by with "Je suis le grand Althusser!" It was in these years that he drafted two versions of an autobiography. They were found after his death in 1990, and first published in French, as a single book, in 1992.

These "memoirs" are curious. Althusser would have us read them as Rousseau-like confessions, but that is hard to do, and the comparison is embarrassingly unflattering to their author. They are clearly an attempt on Althusser's part to make sense of his madness, and to that extent they are indeed revealing; by his own account he wrote them "to free myself from the murder and above all from the dubious effects of having been declared unfit to plead" (it is ironic that their posthumous impact on any unprejudiced reader will surely be to confirm the original forensic diagnosis). As a genre, however, they really come closer to magical realism. The book, especially a short early draft incongruously titled "The Facts," is full of fantasies and imagined achievements, so much so that it is sometimes hard to disentangle the fictive Althusser from the rather mundane creature whose sad story emerges in these pages.

That story is soon told. Althusser was born in 1918, the eldest child of middle-class French parents in Algeria. His father was a banker whose career took him back to Marseilles in Louis's adolescent years. The young Althusser had an utterly uneventful early career. Academically promising, he was sent to the lycée in Lyons to prepare for the entrance exam to the Ecole Normale. He passed the exam, but had to postpone his higher education when he was drafted into the army in 1939. Like many French soldiers, he had a futile war; his company was rounded up by the Germans in 1940, and he spent the next five years in a prisoner of war camp. About the only interesting thing that seems to have happened to him there was that he learned, somewhat belatedly, the pleasures of masturbation. (He was not to make love for the first time until he was 29.)

Finally admitted to the Ecole upon his return to France, Althusser did well there, coming second in the national philosophy examinations. Having spent his adolescence and his youth as an active young Catholic, he discovered left-wing politics at the Ecole and joined the Communist Party in 1948, which was about the time when other young intellectuals, nauseated and shocked by its Stalinist culture and tactics, were beginning to leave it. Shortly after graduating, Althusser obtained a teaching post at the Ecole and settled into the quiet, secure life of an academic philosopher. He was to stay in the same post until being

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forcibly retired in the aftermath of the scandal that ended his career.

It was during his student years that Althusser met his future wife, Hélène Légotien (she had abandoned her family name, Rytmann, during the war), a woman nine years his senior who had played an active part in the Communist Resistance. As he acknowledges in his memoir, it was a troubled, even tormented relationship. They were held together by bonds of mutual destructiveness. By 1980, he writes, "the two of us were shut up together in our own private hell." Hélène seems to have been an unhappy woman, insecure, tormented and bitter—and with good reason. The Communist Party abandoned her after the war, falsely accusing her of some obscure act of betrayal during the Resistance. Uneasy with her own immigrant Jewish background, and desperate for the love and attention of her husband, she put up with his moods, his women-friends and his colleagues, most of whom looked down on her from the very great height of their own vaunted intellectual standing. She was clearly not a person comfortable with herself or others; and Althusser's own bizarre personality can only have made matters worse.

For what emerges clearly from his own account is that Althusser was always a deeply troubled person. This memoir is warped and curdled by his morbid self-pity, by his insecurity and the repeated invocation of Lacanian clichés to account for his troubles. Indeed, the book's main theme is his own psychological and social inadequacy, a defect for which he naturally holds his parents responsible, in equal parts. His mother's insistence on naming him for a dead uncle is blamed for his lifelong sense of "not existing": Louis being homonymic with the word "lui," meaning "him," the young Althusser's name rendered him impersonal and anonymous. (He seems not to have given much thought to the millions of happy Louis among his fellow countrymen.) According to Althusser, his mother "castrated" him with her excessive care and attention; hence his belated discovery of women and his inability to form satisfactory relations with them. And so it goes, for page after page. Small wonder that when Louis does away with his wife, after forty years of manic-depressive bouts, hospitalization, treatment and analysis, we learn that he was taking his revenge on the older woman who not only brought him to Communism but substituted, as he admits, for mother and father alike.

There is a human tragedy here, but it is presented in a breathtakingly narcissistic key. Althusser wrote this memoir not in order to comprehend why he killed his wife, but to show himself and others that he was sane. He had been, as he puts it, "deprived of his status as a philosopher" by being declared unfit to plead, and this final loss of identity, this fear that once again he would "not exist," seems to have been the driving compulsion behind his autobiography. (Other, less exalted murderers have suffered rather greater deprivations, of course, but this, too, our author overlooks.) If we take him at his word, this fear of "not existing" was the very engine that propelled his life's work. By elaborating a doctrine in which human volition and human action counted for nought, in which theoretical speculation was the supreme practice, Althusser could compensate for a life of gloomy, introspective inaction by asserting and legitimizing his existence in the arena of the text. As he says, "I ... emerged as the victor, in the realm of pure thought."

This much, at least, we can learn from the memoir, and it casts interesting new light on the otherwise inexplicably murky and self-referential quality of the earlier philosophical writings. Althusser was reconstructing Marx to give his own life a shape with which he could live, and one that could stand respectable comparison with those of his father (a successful banker) and his wife (a Resistance fighter). We thus learn from this book that Althusser was conscious, in every sphere of his life, of "having practiced a great deception," though it never seems to have occurred to him that this insight bodes ill for the credibility of his intellectual legacy. Unfortunately for its author, however, the book reveals much more. We are presented not only with a man who is on the edge of insanity, obsessed with sexual imagery (a stick of asparagus is "stiff as a man's penis" and so on), dreams of grandeur and his own psychoanalytical history, but also with a man who is quite remarkably ignorant.

He seems to know nothing of recent history. (Among his howlers is an indictment of the "Polish fascist" Pilsudski for starting the Second World War.) He seems only late in life to have discovered Machiavelli and other classics of Western philosophy, and he even admits to a skimpy and partial acquaintance with Marx's texts (something one might have inferred from his published work). He is also unsophisticated to the point of crudity in his political analysis. He seems to have learned nothing and to have forgotten nothing in the last twenty years of his life. Thus there is much talk of "the hegemony of bourgeois, imperialist capitalism"; and he is dismissive of the dissidents of the Soviet bloc ("cut off from their own people") and contemptuous of writers like André Glucksmann for "putting around unbelievable horror stories of the Gulag." Those words were written in 1985!

One puts down this depressing book with an overwhelming sense of bewilderment. How could it be that so many intelligent and educated people were taken in by this man? Even if we allow that his manic fancies met some widespread need in the '60s, how are we to account for the continuing fascination that he exercises in certain circles today? In France he is largely forgotten, though the jacket blurb by Didier Eribon describes the autobiography as "magnificent" and explains that "madness [is] the inevitable price of philosophy." It is a conclusion whose deductive logic and historical accuracy are truly in the Althusserian tradition; but Eribon is a French journalist who has made a career of playing the fawning hyena to the preening lions of Parisian intellectual life, and he is not representative.

In the United States, however, there are still university research centers that devote time and money to the study of Althusser's thought, and mount expensive conferences at which professors lecture one another earnestly about "Althusserianism" in everything from linguistics to hermeneutics. Meanwhile respectable English-language publishers continue to market books with titles like *The Althusserian Legacy*, *Althusser and the Detour of Theory*, *Reading Althusser*, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory* and, inevitably, *Althusser and Feminism*, most of them unreadable excursions into the Higher Drivel.

Althusser was not a charlatan. He himself really believed that he had discovered something significant—or was about to discover something significant—when his illness struck. It is not because he was mad that he was a mediocre philosopher; indeed, the recognition of his own intellectual mediocrity may have contributed to his depressions, and thence to his loss of sanity. If there is something humiliating about the Althusserian episode in intellectual history, then, the humiliation is not his alone. He was a guru, complete with texts, a cult and true believers; and he showed occasional insight into the pathos of his followers, noting that they imitated his "smallest gestures and inflections."

Althusser's work and his life, with his drugs, his analysts, his self-pity, his illu-

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sions and his moods, take on a curiously hermetic quality. He comes to resemble some minor medieval scholastic, desperately scrabbling around in categories of his own imagining. But even the most obscure theological speculation usually had as its goal something of significance. From Althusser's musings, however, nothing followed. They were not subject to proof and they had no intelligible worldly application, except as abstruse political apologetics. What does it say about modern academic life that such a figure can have trapped teachers and students for so long in the cage of his insane fictions, and traps them still?

TONY JUDT is Erich Maria Remarque Professor of European Studies at New York University and the author of *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals 1944-1956* (University of California Press).

Body Language

BY MINDY ALOFF

Mark Morris
by Joan Acocella

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 305 pp., $27.50)

When Mark Morris began to present his dances in New York some fourteen years ago, his efforts weren't treated as a big deal, but they certainly were noticed by members of the New York dance world, and especially by dancegoers who tracked modern and what we now call postmodern dance. Among this group, Morris already had something of a reputation as a distinctive dancer. (Before organizing his own company, he performed in the city with Eliot Field, Hannah Kahn, Laura Dean and Lar Lubovitch.) He had the body of an outfielder, big-boned and bluntly outlined, yet it was perfectly proportioned for the stage; and his face presented a profile that could have been copied from the portrait bust of a Roman emperor.

Within this fascinating body was a spirit that could really move around in an up-to-the-minute way. Morris's dancing crystallized certain contradictory qualities that spoke to audiences who came of age with an expanded sense of what a man, dancing, might be. His movement was vigorously impelled, but it was also strictly shaped and timed. He could alternately hound you and tease you with it, spring like a dog and land like a cat. He had the arms of Samson and the gestures of Delilah. And, for a large man, he was unusually limber. His waist and neck had a serpentine elasticity that lent his movement a kind of internal torque, and sent observers back to photographs of Isadora Duncan (whom, at times, he uncannily resembles). Until the mid-'80s, when he was sidelined by an injury for several months, Morris's dancing conveyed the impression that he could spiral back on himself and sink his teeth into his own shoulder, if he so chose, and that he might so choose at any moment. Mischievous, touching and already an expert performer, he was someone to watch, and to watch out for.

In the sense, at first, that you watch out for a child: "Little Markie Morris is going to give his first concert," one colleague told me when Morris's 1980 evening at the Cunningham studio was announced. "I'm going to go." When I saw her next, I asked her how the concert had fared. "You know," she said, "it was good!" There was more to Little Markie than even his New York fans had guessed, and his earliest audiences included individuals of widely divergent tastes who were yoked together by their common sense of discovery. They were not the writers whose reviews made his reputation, or exacerbated his notoriety; but their initial word-of-mouth reports have a key place in the trajectory of his swiftly rising prestige.

For the story of Mark Morris's ascent to fame and mild fortune over his struggling contemporaries—at the age of 38, he is currently living off the $45,000 he receives annually from his MacArthur grant—is decidedly not the tale of one or two powerful, conservative-minded dance critics deciding to take up his cause and thereby provoking a gaggle of disciples to follow suit, as certain New York dailies have insinuated for years. When Morris began showing his work in New York, his gifts as a dancer were already mature, and his talent as a dance-maker had already been spotted

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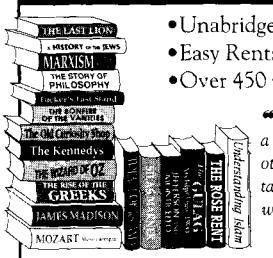

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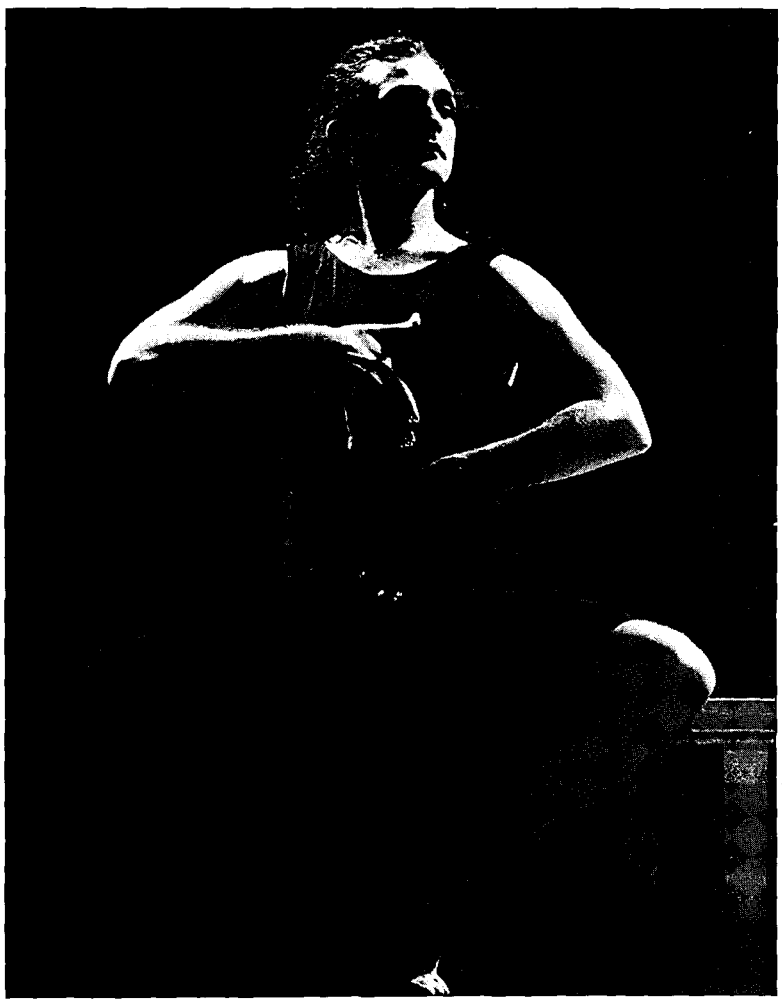
elsewhere. (In 1971, as a young teenager, he began to devise dances for amateur groups in his native Seattle. By 1978 he had had eighteen dances performed, one of them by the Pacific Northwest Ballet.)

What seems to have happened to him in New York is that his dances attracted a lot of writers, some of whom, the dance critics, were moved to make him the subject of their articles. Morris's core audience, like the choreographer himself, is intently verbal. Much of his work demands commitment to language. Nearly half of the eighty-four dances that he has made since 1980 are set to songs, and they address the lyrics in a detailed, often elaborate manner.

Even the pieces that are set to purely instrumental scores, or to no score at all (such as the bleak *Behemoth*), still function in a way that attracts people with a daily experience of sweating out prose. The dance phrases and the stage pictures coalesce into what writers would deem "great lines," that is, climaxes that have the independent life of an epigram or a well-turned joke. They pop out from a carefully prepared choreographic rhetoric, frequently based on a musically inspired theme-and-variations plan, which prepares the eye to follow the various key reversals by disclosing bits of them along the way. This puzzle-making dimension of Morris's choreography exerts its own intellectual attraction, quite apart from the images and the emotions that it serves, and the intrinsically amoral fun of it is especially useful in dances where the mood is unrelievedly devout (*Stabat Mater*), didactic (*Striptease*) or punishing (*Lovey*).

One bold instance of such a standout moment occurs in *The Hard Nut*, Morris's setting of *The Nutcracker* by Tchaikovsky, in which Morris collaborated with the illustrator Charles Burns. To the voluptuous transformation music of Act I—built on a series of ascending scales—that the composer designed for the moment when the Stahlbaums's Christmas tree swells and distends into a virtual Tree of Heaven, Morris shows us the heroine, Marie, huddled on the floor with her head sunk despairingly over her drawn-up knees while she trains a flashlight downward on her bedroom slippers. New scenic elements are matter-of-factly flown in, in the manner of Japanese or Constructivist theater. The feeling of spiritual tumescence that Tchaikovsky so mysteriously entreats from his simple compositional elements is not accounted for visually—indeed, it is willfully disregarded in the staging.

At the musical instant when Tchaikovsky's tree assumes its full grandeur, Morris's heroine senses a change in her brooding environment. She pulls herself to her feet and, like the Marie of any traditional *Nutcracker*, delights to find a giant dream tree made real. In this case, however, what prompts her to two-step around the stage in exultation is a flat, emphatically artificial cartoon of a tree, whose most important element of magic is that it has been masterfully drawn. The audience frequently giggles at this point, as it should: what Marie thinks is "real" (her salvation) we "know" is show-biz. The real salvation of the scene is the experience of listening to Tchaikovsky's music and making up one's own story of salvation from it for oneself.



Photograph by Tom Brazil

MARK MORRIS AS DIDO IN "DIDO AND AENEAS"

The whole passage is a joke—a bitter, brilliant joke on conventional audience expectations. In its marriage of theatrical economy and swollen emotions, the scene is quintessential Mark Morris. There is a grimly moralistic dimension to the idea that can be grating, but that also makes one remember it, like a rap on the knuckles from a dictatorial teacher. And how one positions oneself as a member of Morris's audience determines whether one finds the joke a revelation of vulnerability or a pie in the face. If you feel that he is laughing with you, the transformation scene embodies a statement along the lines of, "This is what it's like to discover that there is no God watching out for us, only a music welling up in ourselves, which leads us to make the connections that, as children, we had counted on God to realize." If you feel that he is laughing at you, the scene embodies a statement along the lines of, "Don't count on me to make the magic happen, Mr. and Ms. Audience. It's all in Tchaikovsky and you'd better listen up."

The Hard Nut was the last concert work that Morris made during his company's tumultuous three-year tenure, from 1988 to 1991, at the Monnaie theater in Brussels. For much of their stay, the group suffered ferociously negative reviews from the local press, and audiences booed them so frequently and so vociferously that the theater must have sounded like a stockyard. Some of the reasons for the company's notorious reception were rooted in cultural politics, and some in Morris's own unfortunate tendency at the time to mouth off to the press about local artistic heroes and Belgian royalty.

Yet the problems were also related to Morris's own natural defiance. The audiences wanted spectacle and balletic-looking dancers. He provided austere images and dancers whose body types deviated dramatically from the ballet norm. The audiences wanted glamour,

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winking innuendos and a sense of romance. He brought them irony, confrontation, tragic impossibilities. They wanted dancing that gave the illusion of ease. He wanted dancing that showed the body struggling to overcome difficulty. They wanted someone who would please them; he wanted to please himself. And he did, right up to the end. The Monnaie crowd craved familiar pleasures; and as a parting shot he gave them one, with a difference: a *Nutcracker* that coddled the ear (it is note-faithful to Tchaikovsky), humored the eye (set in the 1960s, it is often very funny) and insulted the audience's need to identify with the characters. He didn't pull it off for its entire length, yet he managed to pull off a lot. *The Hard Nut* was a resounding success in Belgium, and it has become a success in New York, where this past winter it played for the second year in a row to enthusiastic houses at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Any choreographer who can juggle roses, Jell-O and a hatchet at the same time—as Morris effectively does in this ballet—is a creative talent to be reckoned with, and any insight into his mind is welcome. Joan Acocella's book on the man and his work painstakingly and affectionately rises to the occasion. Acocella is certainly the voice of authority on the subject. She has been an articulate champion of Morris since the beginning of the '80s, when she and I were fellow critics for *Dance Magazine*. I'd walk out of his concerts hypnotized and bewildered into speechlessness, while she floated out enraptured and comprehending. When the Mark Morris Dance Group performed in his native Seattle (which Morris made his home base for a while during the mid-'80s), or in Boston (which Morris and his company consider a second home), or in Brussels, or when Morris worked free-lance for ballet companies in various cities, or when Mikhail Baryshnikov's White Oak Project (which Morris helped develop and for which he has frequently choreographed) performed outside New York, Acocella was there to see what Morris was up to, frequently analyzing his new efforts afterward at probing length in various periodicals.

The unconventional mission that she sets for herself in her book is, for her, the logical capstone to a decade of persistent inquiry. "My goal was to provide an account of his life and a guide to his work," she writes, "but what I wanted most was to give a portrait of his imagination—an idea of how he thinks, or how he thinks the thoughts that lead to his dances." This ambition to expose choreographic decisions as an ongoing psychological process is comparatively rare in dance writing. The precedents for it in English tend to be cautious, drawing the line of speculation at the point where a report of actions and statements crosses over into an account of intentions and meanings. Those biographers who cross the line take a huge gamble: they can string together connections between the life and the art in such a way that the reader cannot bear to look at the dances again (as in a recent biography of Antony Tudor), or they can revive one's interest in dances whose every mystery, it seemed, had already come to light (as in Agnes de Mille's biography of Martha Graham).

Acocella's book whets one's appetite to see the dances. As a guide to his work, the book is an unqualified triumph. It prompts someone else in Acocella's field to unload the Mark Morris videotapes from the shelf and run them through the VCR in sequence. So *that's* what the "X" formation in *Gloria* means. So *that's* how the ending of *L'Allegro* was put together. Ambiguous images become as clear as a punch in the face. Repeated actions lose their dogged individuality and become part of a larger rhythmic engine. What you thought was irony turns out to be sincerity. What you thought was confessional turns out to be philosophical. The interruptions of dance momentum that once seemed maddening now acquire intellectual interest. Sequences that were merely exciting assume dramatic force, and sequences that were boring assume a reason for being.

The book doesn't change your kinesthetic response to these works. Either one's pulse responds to a dance or it doesn't; it is a matter of individual metabolism, and it cannot be reasoned with. Still, Acocella does ask one to reconsider how the works hang together, and how they function as instruments of communication. Acocella brings the choreographer's sensibility close to the reader, as if she were writing about a son whose posturing and defenses she acknowledges but also finally subordinates to what she sees as a basic intellectual and emotional generosity governing his art. One can't help liking Acocella's Mark Morris very much.

Still, the heart of Acocella's book is neither its function as a guide nor its conduit to the man. It is Acocella's elaborate and ingenious case for why this choreographer should be considered a classical artist. The entire book is geared to bring the general reader to care about this distinction, easing one toward it with

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three warm, richly informative chapters of biography and journalism, in which criticism is a subtext; six chapters of vivid criticism in which biography functions as a subtext; one chapter of journalistic criticism, about the company's harsh years in Brussels, during which Morris produced a collection of correspondingly harsh dances ("Except for *L'Allegro*, which was made before the trouble began, all of them have to do with sorrow or confusion or fear," Acocella writes); then—*whoosh!*—a final, apotheosizing essay, called "The Hidden Soul of Harmony," plunging us into the disembodied world of isms (modern-, classic-, romantic-, critic-), with its Hatfield and McCoy feuds over ideas and its restless reconfigurings of ideals.

The issue of whether Mark Morris's dances are classical has been a subject of some dispute among dance critics for years. In 1986 Paul Taylor poked fun at all of us for it in a dance called *Ab Ovo Usque Ad Mala (from soup to nuts)*. (Set to music by P.D.Q. Bach, "edited by Prof. Peter Schickele" and ensconced in a set of zigzagging, sawed-off "classic" Greek columns designed by Alex Katz, the dance jabbed out at a number of conventions and images associated with classicism in dancing, at least one of them surely derived from Morris—a roll on the floor from his acclaimed *Jealousy* solo, to Handel, of 1985.) Still, Acocella is the first critic to carry the argument in favor of Morris's classicism into full-dress battle with Morris's detractors, beginning with Anna Kisselgoff of *The New York Times*.

In rough summary, Acocella contends that classicism in dance is not necessarily identical with ballet, or any other aristocratic technique; or with beauty; or with cheerful calm; or with allusions to ancient Greece; or with what we think of as classical music; or with stylistic refinement and the illusion of grace. She proposes, instead, that the term refers to the choreographer's attitude toward his aesthetic materials: "In the special, dance meaning of that term [a classical dance] is pure dance, issuing out of its music," she writes. There is also a more general meaning: "harmoniously structured, grounded in history and tradition and intent on the general, the universal truth." She notes, too, that Morris's brand of classicism is unusual:

> [Morris] believes in the existence of human wisdom: that there are a fixed number of stories about human life and that we all still know them and care about them.
>
> Such a position is not unheard of among contemporary artists, but it is normally a mark of conservatism. The remarkable thing about Morris's work is how unconservative it is, given this subject matter. . . . It would be hard to find a more classical-looking work than *L'Allegro*, but even *The Vacant Chair*, with Morris storming around in his underpants, has a discrete three-part structure.
>
> Yet discussions of Morris's classicism tend to overstress its stability. What makes most classical art interesting is not an achieved balance but a struggle for balance, and this is true of Morris's work as well. Though everything in the world may be related, it is sometimes hard to discover the relations. Though the universe may have a soul of harmony, that soul is *hidden*: it must be found.

This last sentence is the soul of Acocella's critical enterprise in this book. It justifies her use of biographical material as a pipeline to the personal, psychological origins of some of his dances. (She links the somber *Love Song Waltzes* of 1989 to Morris's own, publicly expressed expectation that he harbors the virus that causes AIDS; and she strongly suggests that *Jealousy*, *Lovey* and *One Charming Night*, three daimonic dances from 1985, were the fruit of Morris's painful separation from a lover.) The notion of a "hidden" soul, of hidden meanings, also dovetails with Morris's interest since childhood in conceptual puzzle-games, and with his intensely private communion with music.

And in the critical war surrounding Morris it permits Acocella to turn around a charge leveled by Kisselgoff, who took umbrage at an article in *The Boston Globe* that called Morris "the successor to Balanchine." "The idea that some of Mr. Morris's works are codes, accessible to an inner club, is what makes it attractive to that inner club in the audience," Kisselgoff wrote. Yes, Acocella answers, the works have codes, but they are not the codes of cults or camp. They are the enduring codes of classicism. Indeed, if one were to pursue Acocella's argument to its logical conclusion, it is possible to call Isadora Duncan, the mother of modern dance, a classical dancer. That is to say, she had more in common with Balanchine and Morris than with Alwin Nikolais or Martha Graham, whose dances did not, as Duncan's did, take their inspiration from music, and whose attitude toward tradition was iconoclastic rather than bonding. (Duncan, who was considered the iconoclast of her day, actually felt strongly affiliated with tradition. The tradition just happened to be several thousand years old.)

Does Acocella succeed? In the most general way, I believe she does. Her definition of classical choreography is clearly stated and immediately applicable, not only for the great choreographers of the past and the present, but also for the fledglings and the tyros who are struggling toward what they hope is a future. For a variety of reasons, we have entered a dark age of theatrical dancing, full of bewilderment and obscurity. In this context Acocella's voice rings out as a standard-bearer from the age of reason.

And yet, if the Mark Morris she considers here (for his career may take many hairpin turns) is indeed a classical artist, he is one of the most idiosyncratic ones on record. His dances say yes to God and to art, and they say no to social and political hierarchies. They say yes to an I-Thou relationship with the audience, and they say no to an I-Thou relationship between two people. They say yes to spiritual motivation, and they say no to grace. He offers a classicism without poise or heroic nobility, and the tone in which he offers it grows more grave as the images lighten. The ring-dances that dilate and shrink and threaten to take off like whirligigs at the end of *L'Allegro* are some of the most serious and monumentally real dance images I have ever seen on a stage. He speaks Handel in the voice of Schoenberg. (And he speaks Schoenberg in the voice of Bernard Herrmann.)

Lightness and gravity: perhaps classicism can't be pared down to basics beyond these. If I were asked to choose one work by Mark Morris that exemplified the pure play of such elements for its entire length, it would be *Three Preludes*, the solo of 1992, to George Gershwin's piano preludes of 1926. Everything that is reliably wonderful about Morris's imagination is there: the joking reversals; the sense of overlapping, contradictory moods; the formal dispensation of emotional drama; the rhythmic surprise the deadpan passion.

Acocella doesn't analyze *Three Preludes*. It would be very interesting to hear her treat the difference in Morris's work between the classicism of his choreography and the classicism of his dancers' performances. In this case, the dancer is either Baryshnikov (*Three Preludes* is part of the White Oak Project repertory) or Morris himself. Both men have performed the work in New York. Baryshnikov, the living embodiment of whatever anyone means by classicism in dancing, was quite fine—clear, precise, detached, controlled, powerful, craftsmanly. Yet Morris—slurry, soft-edged, impulsive, engaged and vulnerable—was thrilling. Isaac Mizrahi's costume for the dance was a simple black outfit, conservative in effect, with white at the neck, white spats and white gloves. If there is

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code for masculine high-style and formality in the Western world in this century—for classicism in fashion—it is, I would think, basic black with white spats and gloves. The problem for a choreographer such as Morris, who is self-conscious about such codes, is that there is no corresponding set-up for the way a spectator thinks. One person's classic is another person's Classic Comic. When I looked at the spats on Morris, my brain said Fred Astaire. Kisselgoff, reviewing Baryshnikov, talked about Mickey Mouse.•

Desert Storm

By Paula Fredriksen

Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Reader from the Biblical Archaeology Review edited by Hershel Shanks
(Vintage, 336 pp., $13 paper)

Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls edited by James H. Charlesworth
(Doubleday, 334 pp., $28)

The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered by Robert H. Eisenman and Michael Wise
(Penguin, 304 pp., $12 paper)

The Jewish war against Rome, which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 C.E., as in many ways the climax of a drama iat had begun some two centuries ear-er with the Maccabean Revolt. In both ·bellions, Jews faced an external enemy hose political culture ultimately col-ded with Israel's idiosyncratic faith. nd in the aftermath of both rebellions ·ws had to come to terms with the more isidious threat, which was Hellenism.

The extraordinary history that issued ı the Dead Sea Scrolls began centuries ırlier. Hellenism, or the civilization that as disseminated throughout the lediterranean and Near East in the ake of Alexander's conquests in the ourth century B.C.E.), was the first great ıternational culture of the West. Its lan-ıage was Greek; its matrix, the city; its olitics, aristocratic yet participatory; its nsibility, profoundly catholic. Ethnic-, in the orbit of Hellenism, was inci-ental, since one could "become" Greek ırough education. Different religions ere actually identical, since the learned ould recognize, with the right training, iat different divinities were expressions the same religious ideas. The Greek pollo and the Egyptian Amon-Ra both ood for the luminous unity of the divine Sun. It was an age of many gods, and the reasonableness of its syncretism was very seductive.

Hellenism affected urban Jewish culture profoundly, abroad and at home. So thoroughly did the Western Diaspora communities of Egypt, Asia Minor and Italy adopt Greek as their language that Jews in Alexandria eventually produced the first great vernacular translation of the Scriptures, known as the Septuagint. In the homeland, cosmopolitan Jerusalemites sought to build a gymnasium, or a cultural center for the study of athletics, literature, music and philosophy; some even endured surgery to remove the signs of circumcision, considered a mutilation by the Greeks. Antiochus Epiphanes, the post-Alexandrian ruler of Seleucid Syria, simply took this assimilationist program further by mandating it; when protest surfaced, he pushed harder. Following through on the logic of Hellenistic ecumenicalism, he ended by erecting an altar to Olympian Zeus, reasonably enough, in the Temple of the Jews' own high god in Jerusalem.

All hell broke loose. By the time the fighting ended in 164 B.C.E., the Seleucids had been routed, the Hasmonean family, under Judah Maccabee and his brothers, had assumed national leadership and the religious and cultural issues that had generated the conflict—should Jews sacrifice also to pagan gods? publicly flout traditional practice? cease circumcision?—were settled by it. Extreme Hellenization was out. The easy part was over.

The triumphant Hasmoneans soon established an independent Jewish monarchy. They also assumed the office of high priest. This touched off considerable controversy, since the high priesthood had long been the hereditary domain of the aristocratic family known as the Zadokites, which traced its prerogative back to the days of Solomon. The Hasmoneans were priests, but they were not Zadokites; and their usurpation of office soured the liberation.

The Maccabees' very success doomed any hope of a united front against less aggressive forms of Hellenism on the part of priestly aristocrats, the nation's natural rulers. Any ruling class had to communicate and to cooperate with the elites of other nations, and for this purpose a comfortable command of Greek language and culture went a long way. The large Zadokite family, meanwhile, splintered. One branch, which had fled during the troubles under Antiochus, established a new temple in Egypt; others found ways to continue the family vocation by setting up alternative temples in Samaria and in what is now Jordan. Still others remained in Jerusalem, lending their prestige to the Hasmonean enterprise. ("Sadducee," the term for the sacerdotal aristocracy used by both the first-century Jewish historian Josephus and his contemporaries, the New Testament writers, may derive from "Zadok.") Hasmonean power eventually waned; Herodians took over, then Roman procurators. But the Sadducees remained the principal mediators between the populace and higher (especially foreign) government. The lesson of Antiochus had not been forgotten: good relations with foreign rulers helped insure the religious independence, and hence the integrity, of the Temple.

But in the early flush of freedom after the Maccabean revolt, another Zadokite defied the upstart Hasmoneans openly. Spurning worship in the Temple he considered insidiously defiled by his more powerful rival, this man (had he served formerly as high priest?) withdrew from Jerusalem but stayed close at hand. Around 150 B.C.E., he joined a group of pietists and established his own community—"the keepers of the covenant of the sons of Zadok"—in the Judean desert. We do not know his name, and we know little else about his life. (The above is also conjecture.) In the Dead Sea Scrolls, he appears as the "Teacher of Righteousness." And herein lies the origin of the Essenes.

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The Essenes were a sectarian movement within late Second Temple Judaism; by the first century they numbered, on Josephus's estimate, some 4,000 members. Those of the larger branch married, lived in towns and still communed in Jerusalem. A smaller, all-male group settled as a celibate community by the Dead Sea, at a site that archaeologists claim never supported more than a few hundred people. Occupied on and off for a period of some two centuries, this settlement was finally destroyed by the Roman legion on its march to crush the Jewish rebels in Jerusalem in the spring of 68 C.E.

In advance of the Roman destruction, these Essenes hid their books in the desert caves of Qumran. Their library was vast and varied. It has yielded a treasure of ancient Hebrew manuscripts of virtually every book, in whole or in part, in the Jewish Bible. The Essenes produced extensive commentaries on these, as well as documents specific to the sect—*The Manual of Discipline* or the *Community Rule* (rules for the monastic group), the *Covenant of Damascus* (rules for the town-dwellers), the *Temple Scroll* (plans for a new or renewed Temple, of gigantic size, to be built once Good had triumphed over Evil) and the *War Scroll* (plans for the apocalyptic final battle):

> This shall be a time of salvation for the people of God, an age of dominion for all the members of His company, and of everlasting destruction for all the company of Satan.... The dominion of the Kittim shall come to an end and iniquity shall be vanquished, leaving no remnant: [for the sons] of darkness there shall be no escape.... At the season appointed by God, His exalted greatness shall shine eternally to the peace, blessing, glory, joy and long life of the sons of light.

These long buried texts reveal how these people lived and what motivated them. The Essenes saw themselves as the "sons of light" living in the final days, at the very edge of time before God decisively redeemed his people; and they dedicated every moment and every aspect of life to preparing, with fierce and austere commitment, for the coming Kingdom of God.

Thanks to Hershel Shanks and others who over the years have contributed to his journal, the *Biblical Archaeology Review*, a superb popular introduction to this amazing library is now available. Handsomely produced and generously illustrated with photographs, maps and charts, *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls* allows the reader to enter into two bewildering communities: the community of the Essenes and the community of the scholars who study them.

Several essays review the riveting story of the discovery of the Scrolls in 1948. In the tension and the turmoil of a world on fire—the rebirth of the Jewish commonwealth, the partition vote in the United Nations, Jerusalem divided, invading Arab armies—E. L. Sukenik, an archaeologist at Hebrew University, shuttled back and forth across the Green Line, desperate to get his hands on the textual treasures held by Arab and Armenian antiquities dealers. Some he secured; more, he knew, lay beyond his grasp.

The majority of texts remained on the Jordanian side of the city, monopolized for more than a generation in one of the most shameful demonstrations of arrogance and avarice in the annals of scholarship, by a tiny team of scholars working out of the Ecole Biblique in East Jerusalem. (The team had no Jewish members.) Meanwhile Sukenik's son, Yigael Yadin, surreptitiously purchased four more scrolls for his country in 1955, by answering an ad in *The Wall Street Journal*. Twelve years later, by then a renowned Israeli general, he secured also the manuscript of the *Temple Scroll*. The monopoly at the Ecole Biblique continued, however, until John Strugnell, the chief editor, in a notorious interview in 1990 in the Israeli newspaper *Ha-aretz*, began the process that ultimately broke the cartel. Shanks reprints this interview, synopsizes the story of the Scrolls' liberation and concludes his volume with a calm assessment of the contribution made by greed, insecurity and anti-Semitism to the unconscionable delay in the publication of this library.

But what a project! Paleographers nervously face ancient *mille feuilles* of crumbling leather. Editing is now a race against time, as the writing itself, having survived nineteen centuries in the caves of Judea, literally disappears before scholars' eyes. (Little wonder: in one of the most wrenching photographs in the book, Father J. T. Milik sits, circa 1950, in a nimbus of Levantine sunlight, burning cigarette in hand, bent cheerfully over these fragile fragments.) One essay details the small technological miracles that enable historians to read from new photographs what they can no longer see on the page itself; another essay shows how to organize these various sheets, pieces, bits and crumbs so that something like connected prose can emerge. The authors communicate their excitement and their love of this work and it is hard not to cheer when they mildly mention some ingenious and simple solution to a problem that, one scan paragraph before, seemed insuperable.

Scarcely less messy than the physical shape of this library is the whirl of mutually exclusive, authoritatively argued interpretations that surrounds it. Shanks gives a nice sample of these, cheek-by-jowl, and it is fun to overhear the professors do one of the things that they do well, which is argue. Something like broad academic consensus does seem to exist on the place of the Essenes in the history of late Second Temple Judaism. Highly fraught and sensationalist questions, however, continue to obscure their relation to another first-century, an originally Jewish, apocalyptic movement. What, if anything, do the Scrolls have to do with Christianity?

To consider this question, we must reflect on how we know what we know about Christian origins, and most particularly about Jesus of Nazareth. Our earliest and best evidence stands collected in the New Testament, though "early" and "best" do not in all instances equal "good." Our earliest witness is Paul. His seven authentic letters appear to have been written midcentury, approximately twenty to thirty years after Jesus's execution. Paul was an urban Jew of the Western Diaspora; his first language was Greek; his bible was the Septuagint. This puts him at several removes—cultural, linguistic, geographical—from the Aramaic speaking, rural, prophetic movement begun by the Galilean Jesus. Paul himself insists that he never knew Jesus and makes clear that he does not think much of his other Jewish colleagues who did. It was the risen Christ, not the earthly Jesus, who was the object of Paul's burning commitment. If all we had from this period were Paul's letters we would know precious little about Jesus—not where he lived or where he died, nothing of what he did, little of what he said.

For this we must turn to the gospels, but there we encounter other problems

The Narcissists

O what self-love their kindness shows,
filling your glass before it has been emptied,
making their house your house. The pool?
Jump in. The boat? Go on, take a ride.
Dinnertime? A gift at every plate,
each one to remind you how loving your host can be,
how fortunate you are to be a guest.
Their comradeship speaks itself so warmly
that you lose your way: this is not friendship,
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PETER DAVISON

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The gospels were written in Greek, where and by whom (Gentiles? Christian Jews?) we don't know. Originally anonymous, the names we know them by—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John—were ascribed only in the second century. A gap of some forty to seventy years stretches between the death of Jesus and these compositions, during which time the Jews fought, and lost, the war with Rome. The evangelists mix historical material from and about Jesus with contemporary polemic (especially against Jews), various theological agenda and their own particular readings of the Septuagint, which they mined for biographical facts about Jesus. (This is how the Jesus of Matthew and Luke comes to be born "of a virgin": the Greek translation of Isaiah 7:14 had *parthenos*, "virgin," for the Hebrew *'almah*, "young girl.") Thus, though they provide more on the topic than Paul's letters, the gospels cannot be approached directly for information about Jesus any more than, for example, Oliver Stone's *JFK* can be used for JFK: both present a mix of fact, reasonable conjecture, creative filling-in-of-holes and flat-out fiction. As historians, we have to sort through.

These problems of language, location and historicity complicate any direct comparison of the Scrolls and the New Testament material. One is the lush literature of a priestly, separatist, largely Hebrew and Aramaic speaking Judean sect, much of it for internal consumption; the other, spare and mobile, exclusively Greek, missionary in intent and effect, built for the road. The Scrolls are the MS-DOS to the New Testament's Mac, and the first century equivalent of interfacing software—humans who went between both groups—is not in evidence.

The several essays on Christianity and the Scrolls in Shanks's volume, the great majority of those in *Jesus and The Dead Sea Scrolls*, edited by James H. Charlesworth, and the whole of the interpretive argument advanced by Robert H. Eisenman and Michael Wise in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* proceed as if this were not a problem. The result is a one-from-column-A, one-from-column-B sort of reading, noting similarities and commenting on differences, without making a case for the historical value of these observations. But mere synchrony cannot establish influence, and textual pointillism gives only the impression of an argument; and, as with its visual counterpart, the coherence dissolves the closer one looks.

We end with factoids. Thus one essay notes that the community at Qumran had meals in common, and so did Jesus with his disciples at the Last Supper. True. The Gospel of John contrasts the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness as ethical designations (the Sons of Light are the good guys, and so on); both at Qumran and in John, these realms are in conflict. Oh. The Qumran community expected two messiahs; Christians claimed Jesus to be the messiah. Right. Both Jesus and the Essenes thought the Bible, the Temple and the poor were important. And so on, especially through the 334 pages of *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (a good third of which is notes, most of them lost on a popular audience). Most of the essays in this volume conclude—and I agree with the conclusion—that there seems to be little or no evidence of influence between the Essenes and Jesus in either direction. But then, whence the book? Whence its title? Whence the blurb, promising that the Scrolls revolutionize our understanding of Jesus of Nazareth?

Eisenman and Wise promise an interpretive revolution. They provide it by reading the Scrolls in relation not to Jesus himself so much as to supposed events in the history of the (authentic?) Christian movement under his brother, James the Just. The library at Qumran, they argue, represents the views of a pro-Maccabean priesthood, anti-gentile, violently xenophobic and nationalistic, temperamentally if not actually identical to the Zealots of the disastrous anti-Roman campaign in 66 C.E. To make their case, Eisenman and Wise date some Scrolls material at least a century later than most scholars would. They also provide modern Hebrew transcriptions of some Scrolls fragments, which they then translate to support their hypothesis. But since these transcriptions are themselves questionable or contested—and a glancing comparison with the tattered originals shown in the plates inspires little confidence—they ultimately serve an aesthetic purpose rather than a scientific one. Finally, matching some Scrolls material to snippets of much later Greek Christian traditions, the authors create what they call "Jamesian Christianity" (a term that for me persistently evoked nineteenth-century Boston rather than first-century Judea). Pro-law, pro-patria, anti-Paul, this James would have been more at home in the twentieth century's Easter Rising than in the first century's.

Eisenman and Wise construct a coherent revisionist picture of the Qumran community. They do so by completely obscuring the relation of the early Pauline and later Christian evidence to the Jewish Jesus and the earliest community gathered in his name. Do all these different people, groups and movements really have so little to do with each other? Can the Scrolls tell us anything useful about Jesus, Paul, Christianity? The answer is yes on both counts. Jesus of Nazareth and the community at Qumran are two points on an arc that passes from the Maccabees through Paul, from the later books of the classical prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel—in the Jewish canon to the Book of Revelation, which concludes the New Testament. It is the arc of a biblical perspective on God and history that scholars label "apocalyptic eschatology," "the revelation of the Endtime": the conviction that God is good; that he is in control of history; that he will not countenance evil indefinitely; and that, accordingly, if things are bad, God must be about to bring them to an end, before he establishes his Kingdom. In the brief time remaining, one should prepare.

Certain key elements appear variously and in various combinations, in Jewish and later Christian apocalypses. Some mention a cosmic battle between Good and Evil just before the End; others, the resurrection of the dead, or perhaps only of the righteous. Some attribute a major role to a messiah or (as at Qumran) several messiahs; in the Christian version we find a messiah who comes twice, his more military role, and the establishment of the Kingdom, relegated to his Second Coming. More frequently archangels or God himself directs the Endtime scenario. Jerusalem is restored and made beautiful; the Temple is rebuilt, renewed or enlarged; the twelve tribes are gathered in from Exile; gentiles cease worshiping their idols, acknowledge the God of Israel and worship with Israel in the New Jerusalem. *Righteousness* pours down like water; social and natural harmony pervade.

In the meantime, however, things are terrible: this is how one knows what time it is on history's clock. Happy people do not write apocalypses, and the genre itself attests to a measure of alienation, resentment and powerlessness. In the cultural and religious confusion of the Hellenistic and early Roman period, some Jews found comfort in their conviction that God would not let things drift; that, for example, he did not want idols in his Temple and if one were placed there, it was a sign that times had become terminably terrible. The worse things got, the better they were about to become.

The Teacher of Righteousness felt the same way: if the False Priest controlled the Temple, the End must be at hand. Almost two centuries later, in a world with Herodians and Romans in charge, Jesus went to his cross proclaiming the imminent arrival of God's Kingdom. A generation after that, Paul confidently preached the same message, now linked to Jesus's Second Coming as cosmic redeemer: "Behold," he wrote in R

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mans, his final letter, "salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed." Josephus chronicled other first-century, charismatic Jewish prophets of the End, many of whom met their death at Rome's hand. At roughly the same time, during a period of anti-Christian persecution, John of Patmos was prompted by an angel to voice the same conviction: "Behold, the time is near."

Jews survived two more rebellions against Rome, one in the Diaspora in 115-117 C.E., one led by Bar Kochba in Judea in 132-135 C.E. Some continued to write apocalypses; but militant messianism had discredited itself as a viable expression of Jewish piety. As gentile churches increasingly claimed the Septuagint as their scripture—augmented, by the end of the second century, by the collection of specifically Christian writings we know as the New Testament—Judaism returned to Aramaic and Hebrew as the languages of prayer and learning. No Western Jewish community ever produced a Latin vernacular translation of the Bible. To the degree that Hellenism represented philosophical learning on the one hand, and the dominant political culture on the other, Jews learned to do without both—and without the Temple and without the Land. Yet the people and the religion survived, one of the two great religions from Western antiquity.

The other great survivor, also born of the momentous encounter of Jewish apocalyptic hope and Roman political domination, was Christianity. Christianity represents Judaism's "Yes" to Hellenistic culture. Modeled on the synagogue community both socially and liturgically, its language and scriptures were Greek, its homeland the Western Diaspora, its culture deliberately international, its theology an intimate marriage of biblical narrative and Greek philosophy. Under Constantine and later Theodosius, the church became a central institution of Roman imperial culture. It too, though for different reasons, pronounced a vivid hope in the imminent coming of a historical Kingdom of God.

Yet the great hope is there, in the Bible itself: the conviction that God controls history and that he will make good on his promise of redemption. Plagues, persecution, wars, earthquake, triumph or disaster: in every generation people see the signs of the End. Predictions of the apocalypse are constantly disconfirmed, but they are never lastingly discredited.

We see a crest in the wave now. The enhanced gravitational pull of the approaching end of the millennium; the existence, for the first time since Titus's army leveled the Temple, of a Jewish nation in its biblical homeland; the theologizing of ozone depletion, ecological disaster and AIDS as signs of divine punishment—all have created a kind of lunar high tide in popular apocalyptic. Read carefully, then, the stories that come out of Waco, or Seoul, or Crown Heights. You will glimpse, between the lines, the shape of the hope that motivated both the Maccabees and the Teacher of Righteousness, Jesus of Nazareth and the embattled defenders of Jerusalem.

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TRB *continued from page 6*

group should be given pause by the White House's demonstration that even one year's balanced budget is impossible under current arrangements. The nightmare scenarios show that balancing the budget is, indeed, politically unthinkable. The merit of a constitutional amendment is that it will, of necessity, change what is politically thinkable.

The nightmare scenarios unintentionally demolish one argument in particular against a balanced budget amendment. That is the fiscal policy argument: we need the flexibility to run a deficit in slow times, to stimulate the economy. The idea of fiscal policy is supposed to be that the government budget can be a damping mechanism on swings in the economy. You run a deficit in bad times and a balance or even a surplus in good times. If it is now politically unthinkable to achieve a balanced budget, let alone a surplus, even in the best of times, the mechanism is seriously broken. It has got to be fixed before it can be of use again.

(The current version of the amendment would allow deficit spending on a three-fifths vote of both houses of Congress. So the mechanism remains available for emergencies in any event.)

A columnist in *The Washington Post* sneers that only the "policy elites" are still fixated on the deficit, while "most people" are more concerned with achieving and enjoying economic prosperity—and what's more, "they're right." No, they're not right. Of course what really matters is actual economic prosperity, and not some bookkeeping number called the federal deficit. But we unhappy few, if few we are, cannot be bullied out of our belief that the deficit imperils America's long-term prosperity. In the courage of our unhappiness, we defy weapon-words like "elites"!

Anyway, both sides of the balanced budget amendment debate play the tiresome game of populist one-upmanship. The pro-amendment forces also claim to represent "the people" who are furious at "Beltway elites" running the nation into debt.

Polls suggest that the pro-amendment forces are right about what "the people" are thinking. The people want a constitutional amendment mandating a balanced federal budget, even though most of them have no idea what accomplishing this would really involve. The real effect of such an amendment would be to protect "the people" from their own appetites. But the people want a balanced budget amendment, and the people should get what they want. They deserve it. May their dreams come true.

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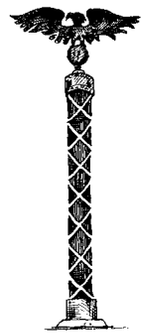
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Old news

THE PRESS CONFERENCE TO ANnounce the "Troopergate Whistle-blower Fund" was held at the Shoreham Hotel, about a mile from downtown Washington. There had been a heavy snow the night before, which made getting around difficult. But the Diplomat Room was nearly full when I arrived, and it was clear why. On the podium were the two famous Arkansas troopers, as well as Cliff Jackson, the renowned Clinton-hater who had orchestrated their allegations of womanizing. More important, there was also a woman—a small, attractive, appropriately frightened-looking woman named Paula Jones, accompanied by her appropriately protective husband, Steve. According to Ms. Jones's affidavit (included in a silver-colored press packet), she had, on May 8, 1991, been a state employee manning the registration desk at the Third Annual Governor's Quality Management Conference in Little Rock. At 2:30 in the afternoon, a trooper approached and "informed me that then Governor Bill Clinton had requested that I meet with him in a certain room number in the hotel." Jones went to the room, where, she declares, Clinton "made a series of unwelcomed sexual advances toward me." She rebuffed him, left and now suffers "emotional distress." Her sworn statement concludes: "FURTHER AFFIANT SAYETH NOT." But she threateneth to say a lot more if Clinton doesn't apologize.

AT THE SHOREHAM, JONES'S LAWyer, Daniel Traylor, vowed to "keep the door closed" on the details of the incident (out of "deference to the First Family") until Clinton could respond. This pledge lasted approximately thirty seconds. After a bit of ritual harrumphing by reporters, Traylor announced he would confer with his client and attempt to come up with "a blow-by-blow account." The two huddled at the rear of the stage. Then Jones took the mike. Clinton had told her she had "nice curves" and "I love the way your hair goes down your body." Had he requested a sex act, a reporter asked? Yes. Was it an act that did not require her to take off her clothes? Yes. Did Clinton undress at all? She'd rather not say. "How can you let that hang?" asked a male journalist, quite proud of himself. A foreign reporter demanded precision: Was it or was it not fellatio that Clinton requested? He was ignored, and the conference broke up.

AFTERWARD, THE REPORTERS HAD a smoke. Not really. Afterward, as usually happens at these events, reporters conferred with each other to try to figure out whether what they'd just seen was "a story," and (what may or may not be a different question) whether anybody was going to report it. The consensus was that if CNN carried it the networks would carry it, which meant that *The New York Times* might carry it, in which case it would be a big story. I thought it wasn't a big story, but not because I didn't believe it. On the contrary, I tend to believe all the Clinton sex stories. Maybe I'm gullible, but this weakness is actually what makes me so vulnerable to the clever two-step scandal-avoidance strategy the White House has chosen. The first step is to denounce the allegations and discredit whoever is making them. The second is to implicitly concede the gist of the allegations but argue that the voters already "processed this information" when they elected Clinton. The tactic can be summarized as: "It's not true. It's not true. It's not true. It's old news."



SINCE I NEVER BELIEVED IT WASN'T true, it's easy for me to think it's old news. It may be harder for others. It will especially be hard for the mainstream reporters who have demanded "proof" of Clinton's philandering. "Where are the women?" asks *Newsweek*'s Joe Klein. Well, here is a woman, to add to the two (Gennifer Flowers and Sally Perdue) who have already come forward. How many more does Klein want? Jones appears credible; she told her hotel-room story to two friends at the time, and they have signed affidavits to that effect. She charges Clinton with "the equivalent of on-the-job sexual harassment" on the theory that since she was a state employee the governor was her "ultimate employer." That may be a stretch, but how can reporters justify ignoring Jones while paying so much attention to Anita Hill, or the accusers of Senator Packwood? Expect much lawyerly analysis attempting to distinguish these cases.

THERE IS ANOTHER TRAP THAT Clinton's defenders have unintentionally set for him. It's what might be called the "60 Minutes" Proviso to the Old News Convention. "Clinton more or less conceded some previous philandering in his famous February 1992 '60 Minutes' interview," writes my colleague Michael Kinsley. Under this standard, only philandering before February 1992 (or, if you prefer, Clinton's July nomination, his November election or at the very latest his January inauguration) counts as "old news" already digested by the voters. That takes care of Jones (aside from the illegal sexual-harassment angle). But it means that any evidence of more recent womanizing must be treated as new news. Indeed, Kinsley writes that such behavior "would reveal a brutal willingness to deceive the public—way beyond the normal politicians' cynicism—as well as a frightening lack of self-control." My fear that Kinsley, one of Clinton's most persuasive champions, has set himself up for a disillusioning surprise.

TRUE, PROOF OF FRESH philandering would add something to what we already know about Clinton. But most of the relevant character insights can be gleaned from all that ancient, pre-1992 behavior. What are those lessons? Well, he dissembles with a bit too much grace and skill. He can lie when necessary. (Know an adulterer who doesn't?) His wife has probably put up with a lot, and presumably knows enough to hold a pretty devastating press conference herself. Almost certainly, he owes her for standing by him during the campaign. All these complications seem very relevant to his performance in office—for example, to any decision on whether to bargain away part of her health plan she may want to keep.

CLINTON IS ALSO THE BEST PRESident we've had in a long time. That is the unspoken reason the sex charges haven't received as much play as you might expect. Reporters are patriots, too; it's their dirty little secret. So Jones didn't make it onto CNN. *The New York Times* buried a five-inch story on her charges which featured Clinton's characteristic find-the-loophole denial. ("He does not recall meeting her. He was never alone in a hotel with her.") Few journalists want to see the president crippled now that he is making some progress cracking large intractable domestic problems. The voters seem to agree. If, thanks to his manifest character flaws, he isn't worshiped, even trusted, that might not be such a terrible thing. Must we admire our presidents? Can't we exploit them? Clinton no doubt wants to be loved. If that makes him work even harder in a futile quest for mass affection, so much the better.

POOR MR. CLINTON. JUST PRESident, nothing more. It seems a fair punishment.

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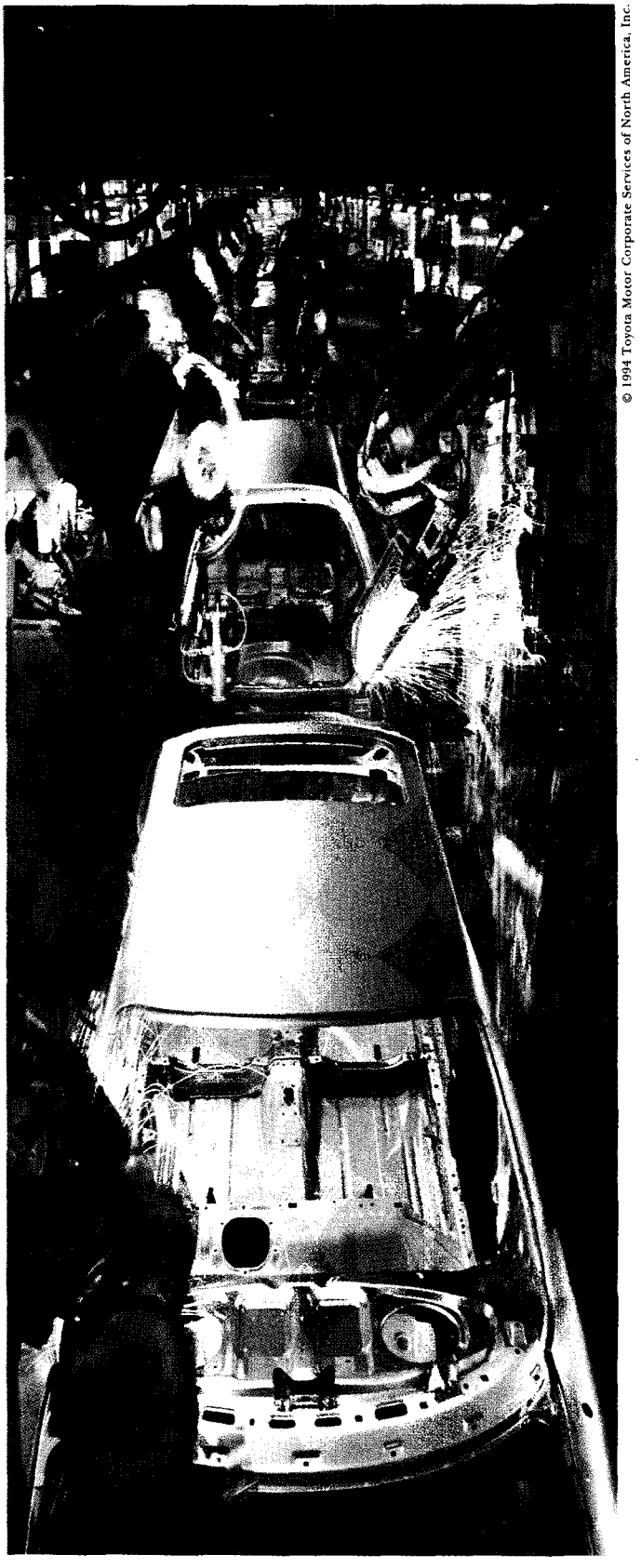

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